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A G&T PUBLICATION

No 4

COLLECTORS DREAM

in this issue:

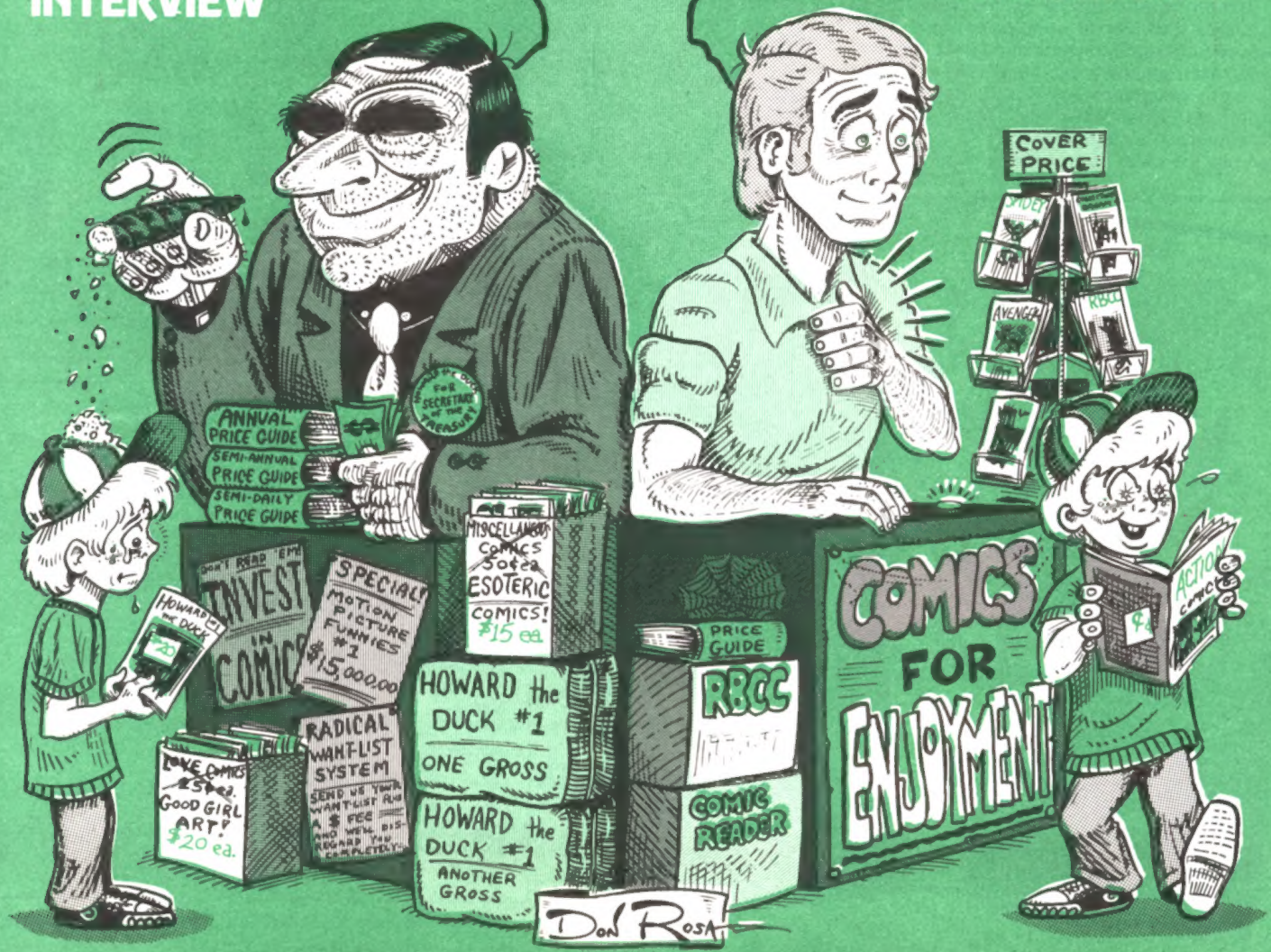
CONSUMERS GUIDE TO COMIC DEALERS

BOB OVERSTREET INTERVIEW

PERTWILLABY PAPERS

JAY ZILBER

WARDWORLD



G&T Enterprises is G (for George) and T (for Tony), two comic fanatics much like yourselves. Both of us read and collect comic books, especially Marvels, and we've found that one of the joys of being comic fans comes from communicating our interests to others. So we got together one day to produce the MARVEL COMICS INDEX, a totally in-depth index to *all* the Marvel superhero comics, illustrated with miniature black and white photographs of *all* the comic book covers.

This is a LARGE project. Marvel continues to publish as many as 40 titles each month, and there are 16½ years of Marvels to index. We've just finished Parts Five and Six, and we're firing up the two books which will make up Part Seven. These should appear in late spring of 1978. There are to be 14 Parts altogether, some (like Part Seven) needing more than one book; plus supplements to be continued into the indefinite future.

Here's what's in each volume: For every Marvel Universe comic, we display its cover and list its issue number, date, cover artist and topic, all story titles and page counts, all known credits (editors, writers, pencillers, inkers, letterers, colorists) and all guest appearances by important Marvel characters. In addition, we feature capsule outlines of the title characters and lots of supplementary notes and background items of interest. Finally, each volume is decorated with a full-color masterpiece cover by a prominent professional artist. Each book is fully authorized by Mighty Marvel—they even use the Index for reference themselves!—and is a true collector's item which belongs on your bookshelf right alongside your comics.

To get started on your set of Marvel Indexes, cut out the coupon below and send it filled out, with your check or money order in U.S. funds, to us at the address indicated. Allow four to six weeks for delivery. Do it today!

—George and Tony

Every page of the MARVEL COMICS INDEX will inundate you with an immensity of information!

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Volume 1 #4 Spring 1978

FOR COMIC COLLECTORS AROUND THE WORLD

An Important Message For Our Readers

Welcome to our fourth big issue! There are some big changes in store for you in the upcoming issues and we want to take this opportunity to tell you all about them.

First of all, this issue of *Collector's Dream* will be the last one in this format. Issue #5 will be a 128 page blockbuster, as will *every succeeding issue*. We've ironed out a ton of production difficulties—the kind which kept our little "monthly" a quarterly—and we have established a firm publication schedule. Advertisers take note! And we should also mention that our covers will be *full-color* on glossy stock.

Naturally, there is also the inevitable price increase. When we started CD, we wanted to keep the magazine as inexpensive as possible, so that nobody could turn it down if he saw it for sale. It turned out that distributors and retailers just weren't making enough money per copy to want to carry it (does this sound familiar?). Equally, we found ourselves lavishing many score production hours on CD without making an adequate return. CD, a labor of love for us, ate heavily into the time we spent on our other projects. Raising the price was our only alternative to folding the magazine.

This issue carries the cover price of 75 cents, and contains 56 jam-packed, tightly set pages with some articles of extreme significance to comic collectors everywhere. At 30 cents, CD was a *steal*; at 75 cents it is still a bargain—especially when we believe that CD is bar none the best produced and most literate publication to serve comic fans. (Don't take our word for it; just ask anyone who has bought one of the 5000 copies we sell of each issue!)

Next issue, and all succeeding issues, will cost $1.95. At 128 pages, issue #5 will be larger than *three* complete 40 page issues like CD #3, and exactly equivalent to *four* complete 32 page issues like CD #1. Since we intend to publish an issue each quarter, this will be better than a monthly schedule in terms of the old issue size. The issue in your hands goes to the printer the first week of March, so you can expect issue #5 to be printed the first week of June, 1978. See our Coming Attractions column elsewhere in this issue to see just what's in the works for #5.

Accordingly, we have revised our subscription rates and expiry issues. Currently, all our subscriptions expire with either #14 or #15. Counting three issues for one, we have changed our expiry issue to #8 across the board. *All subscriptions in effect now will expire with that issue.* And effective immediately, our subscription rate has changed to four issues (still one big year) for $7.50. Our old 12 issues for $5.00 rate is superseded. Subscribers who stuck with us faithfully and patiently during 1977 are being rewarded with a lot more material for their original $5.00 than they would otherwise have gotten.

Now let us fill you in on recent developments in all our other ongoing projects. The *Marvel Index* will reach its halfway point in June with the appearance of Parts 7A, 7B and the first of our Supplements (covering Parts One through Three). The Author's Notes in Parts Five and Six fill in all the details about Index reorganization, upcoming cover artists, additions and corrections. Part Four caught us totally by surprise; we are SOLD OUT of that number—you can't get it from us anymore. And we only have a handful of copies of Part One left. We'll probably sell out within a month or two.

Dealers should note that Indexes are distributed *exclusively* by Phil Seuling (Sea Gate Distributors, Inc., P. O. Box 177, Coney Island Station, Brooklyn, NY 11224) and Bud Plant (P. O. Box 1886, Grass Valley, CA 95945) in North America, and Nick Landau (10 Ladbroke Walk, London, England W11 3PW) overseas. Each of them should still have a reasonable supply of Parts One and Four (not to mention Two and Three) for sale.

The *Glorious Timely Project* recently received a titanic boost. Alex Schomburg, whose artwork appeared on so many of those Golden Age covers, is "very interested" in doing the cover painting for that volume, and we will work out the topic over the next month or so. It is planned as a large-format (11" × 14") hardcover volume with all cover photographs reproduced in color, each book indexed in the same depth as in the *Marvel Comics Index*. This will be the first definitive treatment of the Timely Universe ever to be published, and we'll make this a book every dyed-in-the-wool Marvelite will enjoy and treasure. Look for this one in about two years.

G&T is also working with Stan Lee on his *Marvel Encyclopedia*, which will be published by Simon & Schuster possibly as early as this Christmas. So far, we've almost finished selecting the nearly 1500 entries which will make up the body of the text.

Dick O'Malley, our Continuity Conundrums columnist, is working on a massive *Marvel Plotlines* project. Our Indexes tell you who wrote and drew and starred in each Marvel comic; O'Malley's book will tell you *what happens* in each book. He's already written 150 single-spaced pages, and we are *impressed*. There's still a good two years' work ahead on this one.

We're proceeding slowly but surely on the *Marvel Wallchart* project. Luckily the research we're doing on those other projects can be put to use for this one. Otherwise, we'd be snowed under!

We're at last getting into the DC's. Columnists Murray Ward and Joe Krolik are on tap for some projects, like indexes and summaries of the major DC titles. We'll have more specific information on these once they crystallize.

G&T is on the move! □

MAIL

DRACULA SPEAKS

George:
Thanks for the zine—was quite good, and remarkable in the sense that it was actually intelligent. Most zines these days seem to be either books of art repros or diatribes. It was nice to see a zine that had reasonable criticism and thought-out comments.

You are right about the Marvel continuity problems. After 15 years it has gotten out of hand. Was easy when Stan wrote everything, but with a dozen separate writers, well, the seams do tend to buckle a bit.

Anyway, I did want to thank you for it, albeit a bit late—work and such, and to also ask if it is possible to get the SPIDER-MAN and the FANTASTIC FOUR indexes. I'm taking over the books now with Len leaving, and they could come in very handy.

MARV WOLFMAN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
New York City

Thanks for the kind comments, and it's good to know that you're finding our INDEXES useful.

MARVEL SPEAKS AGAIN

Dear George and Tony:
Just picked up one of the copies of COLLECTOR'S DREAM #3 which you were kind enough to send up to the Bullpen. I loved it. In these days of illiteracy and greed, it is refreshing to see a fanzine which is devoted to intelligent yet fannish articles. I am sorry to have missed your first two issues, but I will recommend what I have seen to all.

My real reason in writing, aside from congratulating you on an excellent issue, is to add a background note to "The Tree Where Spider-Man Was Born," by Bennet Marks. When I was still a Marvel staffer (and it must have been near the end of my time, for the article is dated October 19, 1976, and I went freelance in November), Bennet Marks distributed copies of his essay to various Bullpenners. Stan was so taken with the piece that *he* had copies distributed among all of the Marvel scripters of that time. I guess *their* reactions to the piece can be perceived by reading all comics published *after* that date.

I'm glad to see that you have given "The Tree Where Spider-Man Was Born" the wider circulation which it deserves.

Hoping to see COLLECTOR'S DREAM prosper.

SCOTT EDELMAN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
New York City

When we first read Bennet's article, we knew immediately that the thoughts expressed therein were of interest and significance to comic fans everywhere—not just those fans whose interests lie with Marvel. Coherence and consistency of structure are what make comic universes fun to walk around in. Bennet has written another article, this one hard-core Marvel, which we will be running next issue. And it's a beauty!

USEFUL INDEXES

Dear Folks,
First, let me say how vitally important and valuable the work you are doing is to us who work at Mighty Marvel. Scarcely a week goes by when I do not refer to your magnificent indices—especially Volumes I, III, and IV. I can think of no way to improve upon what you're doing (save for an updating service and getting to IRON MAN faster).

BILL MANTLO
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
New York City

Kind words from Marvel staffers mean more to us than you might expect. They certainly help us weather the months of production hassles, and they make the whole thing all worth while. Here's to ever better comics!

REALITIES

Dear George:
I understand fully about your time/energy commitments that preclude your participation in *Omniverse* at present. And considering the fine work that you're responsible for in fan publishing, it's easy to forgive you. In the past I've waxed ecstatic about the INDEXES (with the exception of my constructive criticisms), but I don't think I mentioned how impressed I was with COLLECTOR'S DREAM (somewhat strange title, though). I've only seen your complimentary first issue (how's #2 coming?), but as you will see when *Omniverse* finally rears its beautiful (I'm being optimistic) head in July, I owe your publication a stylistic debt in terms of layout and design. I want *Omniverse* to have the aura of professionalism that COLLECTOR'S DREAM has.

And now for a mini-review of the content of COLLECTOR'S DREAM #1. My roomie (also a comic collector) saw your editorial "Money: The Real Collector's Dream" and coupled with your article on uniform comic grading thought that the publication was aimed at comics for investors rather than comics for fans. In other words, at first glance, he thought the zine was for Our Enemies, the Dealers. I had to correct his erroneous impression. Hopefully future issues will be a bit more balanced between hideous practicality and fan-type subjects. The Conrad interview was artfully interesting. His comment about there being no such thing as creation from nothing is very much in keeping with an article Dean Mullaney has written for *Omniverse* #1 in which he proves according to the Om Theory that there's no such thing as imagination. Murray's column concerned a subject I'm caught up in—though at present his major contention—overuse of future disaster themes—is somewhat moot, what with the cancellation of Killraven, Hercules, and the Guardians. (Maybe POTA is gone, too.) Murray wrote me to say that he may be mentioning *The Treatise On Reality in Comic Literature* in future installments, a move that thrills me no end. Your upcoming projects promo excited me the most, however, especially the Marvel Wallchart, which to me sounds incomprehensibly complex to do right (especially with bargain-basement revisions on the concepts by "Hack" Kirby's Eternals).

As far as my own projects go, I've just recently started a business partnership with Dean Mullaney for our fan publishing projects. We've got many of them in the planning stages, but this year should see the release of at least three. *Omniverse* #1 in July, the *Primer On Reality* in May, and *Practical Reality* (the Comic Writer's Reference) in September. The *Primer* is a *Reader's Digest* version of *TORICL* geared to a wider audience's comprehension and interest level, and is meant to ecquaint fankind *en masse* about the finer points of the Omniversal Concept. It will be handbook-sized, have four times the print run that *TORICL* did, and will be given away for 50 cents. Besides priming people on reality, it will also prime the audience for *TORICL*'s successor, *Omniverse*. I'll send you a copy of it as soon as we get it.

MARK GRUENWALD
211 West 88th Street #3A
New York City 10024

It's always a good thing to plug the projects of a fellow reality enthusiast! But speaking of "Our Enemies, the Dealers," I think it's only fair to mention that our real enemies are certainly not *the Dealers, but are ignorance, greed, improper grading practices, bad*

COLLECTOR'S DREAM MAGAZINE

G&T Enterprises
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COLLECTOR'S DREAM AD RATES

AD SIZE	WIDTH HEIGHT	Price
1 / 6 PAGE	(2½" x 5")	10.00
1 / 4 PAGE	(3½" x 5")	13.00
1 / 3 PAGE	(2½" x 10")	16.00
1 / 3 PAGE	(5" x 5")	16.00
1 / 2 PAGE	(7½" x 5")	22.00
2 / 3 PAGE	(5" x 10")	29.00
FULL PAGE	(7½" x 10")	39.00
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CENTRESPREAD		73.00

All ads must be VERTICAL, BLACK AND WHITE, CAMERA-READY and SIZED. We can't absorb the costs of camera work at our current rates; however, screening of photographs and reduction can be done for $4.00 extra. If the same ad is to appear more than once, there is of course no screening or reduction charge after the first time.

NO MESSY OR OTHERWISE UNATTRACTIVE ADS WILL BE ACCEPTED. This includes cross-outs, super-dense typing, unclear handwriting. If you type your ad, be sure it is as BLACK AS POSSIBLE. If in our printer's opinion an ad will not reproduce clearly, we will not waste your money printing it.

EXTRAS: Don't hesitate to write us about any extras you may have in mind.

DISCOUNTS: Repeat advertisers may take a 5% discount off the total cost of their ads if they pay one month in advance. Should you want to change your ad after a while, this can still count as a repeat ad.

MULTIPLE PAGE DISCOUNTS: You may take a 5% discount from the total cost of your ads, providing you buy **more** than 2 full pages of ads in one issue.

Our typesetting and layout services will transform ordinary looking price lists and texts into beautifully legible pieces that will be real treats to read. All charges are based on the average amount and size of type that is found in the pages of CDM. Should your ad contain much more than the average, there will be a small charge for the extra type.

When sending ad copy for typesetting, you must provide all extras such as: your own logo and any emblems or photos. Please note that all typesetting and layout charges are in addition to the ad rates. Prices are available on request.

service and underhandedness. Hell, some of my best friends are Dealers! And Omniverse *has at last seen print; a truly sharp job, well worth a place in every fan's library.*

THE POST OFFICE PROBLEM

George:

You mailed COLLECTOR'S DREAM #1 (postmark March 29, 1977) and it arrived today, April 23—and it was sent FIRST CLASS! Either U.S. and Canadian mail services can't read or they're both super-slow!

Always sleep late on my day off, woke up, got the mail, spent quite some time reading and *enjoying* COLLECTOR'S DREAM #1. Check for $5.00 enclosed for subscription. I've wanted to see a publication like COLLECTOR'S DREAM for quite some time. Question: In these first few pages, you deal mostly with the *present* comic art. Will you be dealing with or have an interest in the *past*? Sure hope so. Thoughts: I would like to see COLLECTOR'S DREAM combined with COLLECTOR'S DELIGHT. Don't wanna have to subscribe to *two* magazines!

Though they are very well thought out (I've seen 'em) and beautifully produced, I have no interest in acquiring the MARVEL INDEXES. I would have a great interest in Timely/Atlas indexes, but not in a big $costly$ *hard cover*. Would prefer to buy only items of special interest to me, say the *Marvel Mystery* index, the *Captain America* index, the *Human Torch* index and the *Sub-Mariner* index. By the time these indexes would be published, they could cost $6-10 each, but a hard cover with color $50-100. Too many $$$ to spend at one time for me. The ideal way would be shorter soft cover T/A indexes with color, perhaps.

Hope COLLECTOR'S DREAM becomes a mag of interest to *all* comic art fans and collectors. A publication cannot be "all things to all collectors," but a little bit of today, a little bit of yesterday, a little on comic books, a bit on comic strips, will be the best way to interest all comic art fans everywhere. The field of comic art is so-o-o-o VAST! I sure would like to see all areas touched on.

JIM JONES
744 Pomelo Drive
Vista CA 92083

The Post Offices of our respective countries are not just slow, *they're downright dangerous! We've lost over 400 copies of our publications through mail damage and loss, including large multiple-copy orders from dealers. It's bad enough to always be behind schedule (oboy! Your letter is nearly a year old and we're just getting around to it!); but the problems are compounded by the unwillingness to work of outside agencies. We are still unable to find a decent alternative to the Post Office, unfortunately. As for the Glorious Timely Project, this year (1978) will see us actually getting started in the indexing nitty-gritty. We've finally put together the whole Timely run under one roof, after nine years of searching—and let me tell you, it was certainly a relief to get that out of the way! Finally, we're taking steps to increase the general reader interest of our magazine by greatly increasing its page count. This will allow us to avoid the "topical" nature our issues have had to have previously. A bigger format gives rein to a wider selection of articles from all over. One curious thing is that we have yet to receive a reasonable article which deals with DC comics or some of the other topics you mention. This is most definitely* not *the case with Marvel articles, of which we have a superb selection to publish in upcoming issues.*

UPCOMING INTERVIEWS

Dear George and Tony:

COLLECTOR'S DREAM is great! It's the answer to the short-lived *Marvel Art Review*. Since the Chicago Comicon I have been awaiting more info on the fantastic artist Tim Conrad. All I can say is, thanks! Please try to find more interviews on comics people not directly affiliated with the field. One argument you can settle for me is, how many issues of Marvel Comics from *Fantastic Four* #1 on are there? My guess is about 3500. Good luck on future issues and all your G&T projects.

MERRICK LEX BERMAN
119 Vassar Dr. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106

Right now we have nine *more interviews on tape in various stages of transcription, a product of our trip to the San Diego Convention last July. The first of these, with Bob Overstreet, is published in this issue, and we hope to publish the rest throughout this year. As for your other question, when I stopped compiling my Computer Index to the Marvels in 1975, the actual count of comics had reached over 3500. I'd say it's closer to or even exceeding 4500 by now.*

POOR COLLECTORS?

Dear Mr. Olshevsky:

I enjoyed the advice to collectors although neither I nor most of my friends fit the collector you're advising. I'm one of the miserable poor who can't afford to pay for any grade higher than "good" (most of my back issue buying is in the "fair-poor" category). If I'm to buy the titles I want, I spend less than $5.00 an issue, often less than $1.00. (Even more often, thanks to the blessedly cheap back-issue shop I patronize which caters to cheapskates like me, I pay 50 cents or less an issue.)

I want the comics to read, and as long as they have their pages and covers, and aren't defaced, they're good enough for me. You seem to be advising the collector who can and will put down $30.00 for maybe 50-70 different comics.

I wonder how many collectors are like me and how many like you. Probably there are more like you because the ads in *The Buyer's Guide* and the prices in Overstreet all seem to be assuming that the majority of collectors are like you.

Even though your advice doesn't fit my buying habits, it sounds good and I'll keep it in mind for the day when I'm comfortably well-off (if ever).

ANN NICHOLS
4864 Sioux Avenue
Sierra Vista AZ 85635

Nowhere do we advise people to spend big money for comic books, please note! Our advice is this, in a nutshell: if you are going to spend lots of money for comics, be sure you know what you're doing before you get in over your head. We cannot think of a better system for insuring this than the one you describe in your letter, which is to pick a limit you can afford to pay and stick with it. There are many days when we wish that more collectors took your approach to the hobby.

PROFESSOR SMYTE, SIR, I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SPINAL ACCESSORY WAS THE ELEVENTH, NOT THE SEVENTH, CRANIAL NERVE.
I DO NOT K YOU — YOU TELL ME NAME
SCREECH
BESIDES, I VAS JUST TESTING DER KLASS MIT DAT LITTLE MISTAKE... AND YOU VERE THE ONLY ONE
I REWA THE HIG THE IRO ER. ! STAR!

AND LOTS OF TIME CREATES HEADACHES

Dear George and Tony:

I received my back issues of COLLECTOR'S DREAM and must say that this collector's dream finally came true when you produced this magazine of top quality and interesting articles.

Whenever I read COLLECTOR'S DREAM, I feel like one of the 50,000 members of comic fandom, instead of being the only one of my family and friends who is a comic collector. I really enjoyed the money editorials and especially liked the items about Marvel Continuity. I can't quite get the drift of Pertwillaby Papers and didn't quite find the Pulp Villains article all that good. Oh, well, "different strokes for different folks."

Hurry up with the Marvel Chronology Wallchart and your Glorious Timely Project. On second thought, don't hurry. Time creates beauty.

Suggestions: How about bringing back the Free Plugs Section and creating a Pen Pals column?

DAVID WILLIS
2757 Indianapolis Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50317

Stick with Pertwillaby Papers; it's worth the effort! And we hope to take a bit less time *in the coming year and in the years to come.*

ROSA/ZILBER KUDOS IN ADVANCE

Gentlemen:

I read with interest your full page ad on page 56 of the current *Buyer's Guide*. Although I don't recall seeing any ads for your publication before, anything that has both Don Rosa and Jay Zilber in it is okay in my book sight unseen.

STEPHEN BORER
2135 Iglehart Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL?

George, Tony and the gang at G&T:

I'm 16 years old and have been collecting comic books for about 3½ years. I'm far from being an expert and there is a lot I don't know about the vast world of comic book madness. But ever since I picked up COLLECTOR'S DREAM, new dimensions have been introduced to me and I find comics are no longer all that confusing.

I think that currently there is no publication close to touching the down-to-earth ideas and suggestions you people discuss. It's nice to know that some people *do* care about comic book inflation.

Don Hutchison's article was good reading (love those book photos!) and Franc Reyes has always been a favorite of mine since those Tarzan stories he illustrated over at DC. WARDWORLD set me straight on all those alternate worlds and now I look at J. Jonah Jameson and Ms. Marvel in a different perspective. BRAINSTORMS filled in what George left out of his editorial. Altogether, issue #2 was a perfect issue. I'm looking forward to reading COLLECTOR'S DREAM for many years to come, and I hope you have as much fun putting it out as I do reading it!

MITCHELL BULLOCK
4460 Overland Ave. #22
Culver City, CA 90230

Yeah, Mitch, we have a lot *of fun putting it out. A* lot *of fun!*

AND YET MORE PRAISE

Dear George and Tony:

Your editorials on the great god MONEY were a lot more interesting and informative than I thought they would be. Little on this subject has been written in fandom. As always, I am a fan of Don Rosa and these early Pertwillaby Papers are great. Your illustrations are magnificent, particularly Franc Reyes' full page drawings. Keep it up!

H. KEATING DUGARM, JR.
2031-6th Street NW
Minot, ND 58701

KUDOS FOR KEN

Dear George and Tony:

Be sure to keep Ken Steacy and Franc Reyes on your staff as artists, Ken Steacy in particular. I have been admiring his artwork from his "Super Student" days to his debut in *Star*Reach* and his artwork in your magazine.

Why don't you run an interview with Jim Craig?

LARRY CARUANA
219 Edenbridge Drive
Islington, ONT M9A 3G9

Jim Craig interview will be coming up very soon in COLLECTOR'S DREAM. Watch for it!

GOOD MARKS FOR MARKS

Dear G&T:

The best feature in #3 was clearly Bennet Marks' "Tree Where Spider-Man Was Born." I don't think I'd ever seen Bennet's name before, but I hope I see a lot more of it. The bonsai business struck me as superfluous, but the volume of data he presented was impressive. How'd he ever manage to write this in a single day? Something this big usually takes me a week. He makes many telling points; e.g., that every new pantheon (like every new galaxy, parallel world, omnipotent alien, etc.) diminishes our respect for every one that's come before.

I completely agree with Marks also that continuity has financial value (not that I care a great deal about Cadence's profit margin). After all, how did Marvel get to be the Number One comics company? They'd been on the verge of folding in the early '60's, as I recall. In part, sure, it's because Marvel comics are more exciting: more sensational, more violent, more personalized. But in large measure it's also better continuity. Did the Flash fight Captain Boomerang before he met Vandal Savage? You wouldn't know it from reading the story. But Peter Parker very definitely fought Dr. Doom before he fought the Enforcers. That's the kind of thing that pulled me away from DC in the mid-sixties, before I got into esoterica like cutting to a new distance every panel (i.e., the kinds of things that made me go back to *Infantino*). I cannot believe it doesn't appeal to lots of other pre-fans, too.

CHRISTOPHER MELCHERT
212 North Alfred Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

A BARKS INDEX?

Dear George and Tony:

How about an index to Carl Barks and Walt Kelly, in color?

JAMES SALITURI
7105 6e Ave.
Montreal, QUE H2A 3E3

Write one, man, write one!

HE MISSED #2!

Dear George and Tony:

Having perused the first and third issues of COLLECTOR'S DREAM, I find myself in the peculiar position of liking the idea tremendously but being put off by the product itself.

COLLECTOR'S DREAM is a nice package—well-produced, good-looking, roomy and above all reasonably-priced. My primary objection is the annoying bias toward Marvel Comics in all your text. Bias, come to think of it, is too weak a word. Frankly, COLLECTOR'S DREAM seems to take the stand that Marvel is the only comics company in existence! As you editors seem to be strictly Marvelmaniacs, a Marvel bias must be expected, but in the interests of comic fandom at large, I don't think it's fair to fill issue after issue with the same old stuff. Especially when COLLECTOR'S DREAM is such a fine forum for articles on all phases of comic art and history.

How about articles about books and characters of other companies—both current (DC, Charlton, Gold Key; yes, even Archie) and past (Hillman, Harvey, Prize, Orbit, Atlas, Ziff-Davis, Fawcett, Radio, etc., etc.)? How about overviews of trends from the Golden Age till now—superheroes, Sword & Sorcery, crime, adventure, weird tales? What about tracing the careers and influence of artists of importance? The world of comics is rich, much richer than the output of one single company during the last 16 years.

As the Marvel Universe is George's personal obsession, I doubt that we'll stop seeing continuity treatises; but I am seeking *balance*. It would do COLLECTOR'S DREAM good to diversify its content and take full advantage of its unique position in the world of fandom.

RON HARRIS
65 Hemlock #15
Redwood City CA 94061

All in good time, Ron, all in good time! Meanwhile, try to pick up a copy of issue #2. The main article deals with the pulp villains who are part of the inspiration behind almost all of comic literature. It is truly excellently written and should fill your need for non-Marvel material until COLLECTOR'S DREAM #5 appears.

SHIFTY AXES

Fellow Freaks!

Aside from producing and directing educational television, I am a Marvel fanatic! And, yes! I WANNA BE A MARVEL EXPERT!

Please (pant, pant) rush me the FREE flyer on the MARVEL COMICS INDEX as quickly as is humanly possible. Also any and all other freebies concerning the Marvel Universe—educational TV don't pay so good!

May your Cosmic Axis never shift!

DOUGH HUBLER
c/o WSJK-TV
ETSU Box 21, 370A
Johnson City, TN 37601

On the other hand, we get these kinds of letters...

COSMIC ADVENTURES

Dear Sirs:

I am putting together what I hope to be a great artzine, called *Cosmic Adventures*. Can you plug us in your fantastic fanzine? We really need artists badly, so if you know any good artists, have them send me some samples of their best work. Thank you and good luck in the years to come.

MIKE GONZALES
628 West 151 St. #1E
New York City 10031

Consider it done, Mike.

SHOP-BY-MAIL

Ads 15¢ per word. No minimum word count.

WANTED

Wanted: New comic and SF material for my two stores. Send wholesale lists to: Magic Door Books, 169 N. Euclid, Upland, CA 91786.

Wanted: HOWARD THE DUCK newspaper strips. Please send price list to: Glenn E. Miller, Jr., 7903 Hixson Pine, Hixson, TN 37343.

Wanted: Canadian Comic Books. Send selling list to Marshall Ferguson, 1618 Chilton St., Baltimore MD 21218.

Wanted: AVENGERS #6, 8 in FN+. Paying $5.00. Please contact: Andy Rutenberg, 161 Earl, Kingston, ONT., Canada, K7L 2H3 (613) 549-3346.

Wanted: Marvel superhero comic books. Order my 25 cent Buying Guide today. Doug Ostrander, R.R. #4, Picton, ONT., Canada K0K 2T0 (613) 476-4183.

Wanted: Old issues of the FANTASTIC FOUR. Send name and address to: Jeff Dolan, 2001 Ohio Ave., West Mifflin, PA 10512.

All New Subscribers are entitled to one FREE 25-word Shop-By-Mail ad with their subscription

Wanted: Golden Agers with drug-related stories. Send price and description to: Randy Thompson, 817 White Rock, St. Louis, MO 63131.

Wanted: SPIDER-MAN #1,3-5,7-9,10,11,13 in FINE to MINT condition. Send all descriptions and prices to: Kerry Singer, 97 Deersfield Ave., Kitchener, ONT., Canada N2B 1C7.

Wanted: ADVENTURE #247. Will pay up to Overstreet Prices for MINT copies. In any case, send your offers to Tom Burkert, P.O. Box 26, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549.

Wanted: I'll buy strips. Needed: HOWARD THE DUCK (S), CONAN (D+S), STARHAWKS (D+S), on monthly basis. 5 cents a day per strip. Write: Ruben-George Toyos, 7209 Broadway, N. Bergen, NJ 07047.

Wanted: I welcome letters about collecting from collectors everywhere. Especially anyone in Alaska or Seattle. Please write: Mike Grisham, Box 422, Skagway, AK 99840.

Wanted: Att. COMIC DEALERS! Please forward your price list for back issues of Marvel Comics. Wm. G. Zuschlag, P.O. Box 234, Huntington Valley, PA 19006.

CONVENTIONS

COASTCON 1978, March 31-April 2, at Pete Fountain's Buena Vista Hotel On the Beach. Write COASTCON COMMITTEE, 8401 Vanna Road, Biloxi, MS 39532.

Comic Collecting Is a Small-Time Hobby

by George Olshevsky

Last July (so long ago!) Tony and I took our first big outing to the West Coast, in the form of a trip to the San Diego Comic Convention. We are both veterans of many years' attendance at large conventions, but nevertheless we were immensely impressed with the Con, which had an air of spontaneity and good times generally lacking in such organized affairs. Great show, people, and we'll be back this year!

Anyway, the San Diego Con started me thinking about conventions in general, and whether or not (and why) they seem to have deteriorated in interest and quality. (San Diego was an exception.) An editorial was planned for this issue on the subject of conventions, and we even had Franc Reyes draw us an editorial cartoon (see facing page) to illustrate it. Then events occurred which gave us cause to think more deeply, not just about conventions, but about the state of affairs of fandom in general, and we were overwhelmed by the realization that the whole comics scene—from the product being collected to the collectors, dealers and professionals—is basically a small-time operation. We began to compare comic collecting to such diverse and well established hobbies as stamp and coin collecting, model railroading, amateur astronomy, rare book collecting, chess and others in which we have dabbled from time to time. Frankly, comic collecting fails to stack up against any hobby worthy of the name.

So we wrote a broader, more expansive editorial, on the subject COMIC COLLECTING IS A SMALL-TIME HOBBY. And it grew so long and so intricate that we had to break it up into two parts, of which the first we are publishing below. In that first part, we examine the product itself: the comic book. There is a pervasive contempt for comic books among the general public—not to mention ignorance—and some of it at least is due to the attitude on the part of many professionals that they are producing junk for kids. This attitude threatens the hobby and the comic medium itself by burying it at the bottom of the literary pile. In the second and concluding installment, to appear in this space next issue, we examine fans: *their attitudes towards their comics, the people that produce them and the people from whom they buy them; what fandom lacks (a large topic); and how fandom must change if this hobby is to go anywhere.*

The Toronto *Globe and Mail*, which is as fine and reputable a newspaper as is published in this city, several months ago sent a reporter to interview me for an article about comic book collecting. After some negotiations, I found myself talking at length over the telephone about all the interesting aspects of this hobby, including such topics as the makeup of comics fandom, the history of the comic book, why I collect comics and which comics I collect, and so forth. The conversation was quite enjoyable to me, and I invited the reporter over to my apartment for a photography session and some followup discussion.

At the reporter's insistence, we spent a few minutes (out of about four hours) discussing money, how much comic books cost these days, the *Price Guide*, what my most valuable book is worth on the market and why I find it necessary to spend large sums of money for certain comic books. Mostly, though, I held forth about the many non-monetary aspects of the hobby. It was a singular relief to speak with a layman who seemed interested in what I had to say, and who lacked that universal "gosh wow" attitude so common to such individuals.

So the let-down when I saw the article was *abysmal*. The article essentially said nothing more than, "Look at this character Olshevsky. See how much money he spends for comics. See how much money you could have made had you saved all those trashy books you used to read as a kid." Nowhere was there mention of the Timely Comics, of the case history of the Marvel Universe, of the joys of collecting, of the merits of Steranko artwork and storytelling, of the comic medium as a genuine and novel artform.

So it goes.

The moral of this anecdote is, I guess, "If you want something done right, do it yourself." But there is a deeper moral as well, one which surfaces after some introspection, and it is the subject of this editorial. The deeper observation is that *comic book collecting is a small-time hobby*.

Let me illustrate this assertion with a hypothetical example. Suppose I were an active collector of stamps or coins, which are probably the most widespread of all hobbies. I used to be both a stamp and a coin collector, but switched to comic books when I saw the tremendous potential of that medium. Stamp collecting is, after all, really nothing more than the accumulation of small, colorful labels, whose designs frequently commemorate some idiotic historical event or memorialize some wretched politician. Coin collecting is almost the same thing, the difference being that the items of interest are circular metal slugs rather than paper. In both cases the objective seems to consist of filling the gaps in a stamp or coin album and relatively little else.

As hobbies go, both stamp and coin collecting have lengthy histories filled with colorful and eccentric people, and both are indulged in by heads of state, professional people, schoolchildren—people in all walks of life. Were I still a stamp or coin collector, I have no doubt that the article resulting from the interview would have dwelt on the historical significance of the various items in the collection, the knowledge and social benefits accruing to the collector, the sciences of printing and engraving, and so forth. It would certainly not be regarded as remarkable that there are persons in this world willing to pay over a quarter of a million dollars for a particularly rare stamp or coin—for a small piece of colored paper or disc of metal! Never mind for the moment the sheer cash involved; what these hobbies have, and comic book collecting conspicuously lacks, is public *respect*. It is this lack of respect which makes comic book collecting a small-time hobby.

A big comic convention is like nothing else in the universe

Well, you say, "So what? What do I care what the rest of the world thinks of my hobby? Isn't that my business? In a planet full of fools, I know what I like and I have found my nirvana."

This outlook is defensible, to some extent. The world *is* brimful with dolts, and it generally makes not one whit of difference what they think—if such a word may even be applied to their mental processes. But the *real* misfortune is that, because the hobby lacks respect, the turkeys are getting into it and ruining things for everybody. How many people were turned off comic books as a result of that article, and will never appreciate, or even see, the artwork of Hal Foster, Carl Barks, Alex Raymond, Berni Wrightson, Winsor McCay, Jack Kirby or John Buscema, because they will continue to think that comics are trash for kids? And worse, how many speculators will read the article, bring in their big bucks without a shred of anything to offer but a furtherance of the comic book inflation, thereby raising the prices of back issues for everyone even faster than before?

The lack of respect for the hobby, and the medium as a whole, is not confined to the man in the street. Recall an interview which took place about two years ago, on Tom Snyder's *Tomorrow* television show. Present were Stan Lee, Julius Schwartz, Carmine Infantino and a fan named Warren Storob. The offhand comment, by Julius Schwartz of DC Comics—which very nearly caused me to pitch the boob tube off the porch (a most spectacular event, considering I live on the 22nd floor)—was, "Nah! Comics are for entertainment, for kids. Read 'em onna toilet!" Damn it, I don't own 5000 comic books just so I can read them "onna toilet." If the *professionals* talk this way on network television, then it is small wonder that the whole comics scene is mired. Where, for Heaven's sake, does it say that something entertaining also has to be *mindless*?

In researching this editorial, we had occasion to list the many ways in which comic books fall short of being a literary form, and in which comic book collecting contrasts with other hobbies. The length of the list was appalling. Our faith that things would get better was severely shaken, because we discovered not one but several vicious circles tending to keep comic books in their present low position. We believe that the medium is simply too interesting to be so universally ignored and even condemned; but it will take a forthright attitude on the part of the professionals to effect any sort of change—an attitude few if any are prepared to affect.

Comic books are a literary desert. There are essentially only two kinds of comic books being produced and marketed in any quantity today: "comics for kids" (generally called "overgrounds") and "comics for adults" (generally called "undergrounds"). The one criterion which reliably distinguishes between overgrounds and undergrounds is the presence of *sex*. Both classes have in common juvenile plots, a lack of subtlety and a formulistic structure. In overgrounds, these qualities are held to be virtues; in undergrounds, the presence of sexual imagery (frequently gloriously without any shred of "redeeming social value"—and in the company of incredibly gory violence) attempts to cover up for these stylistic faults. Very little of either group is worth serious consideration by adults looking to be enlightened or entertained (note that I did *not* say *nothing* from either group).

> "The medium of comic books is capable of supporting a much wider range of storytelling than it has been."

The problem is not that overgrounds and undergrounds exist; it is rather that these are the *only* kinds of comics, more or less, which are published today. There is surely a place for such books in the field of comic literature, just as there is a place for juvenile books and pornography on the bookshelf and cartoons, B-grade serials and stag films in the motion picture theatre. But in both latter instances, the named genres form only a small part of a much wider spectrum. In comics, they *are* the spectrum.

You might ask what difference this makes, maintaining that this is what comics are *for*, that the virtue of comics lies in their distance from established or accepted literary norms. Perhaps. But we believe that the medium of comic books is capable of supporting a far wider range of interesting story-telling than it has been, without having to sacrifice any of the publications which already exist. Comic books have too long been shoved under the rug because there is nobody available who is willing and able to write and draw a decent, literate, adult comic book. Your editor has read and enjoyed such novels as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Shogun*, *Childhood's End*, *The Foundation Trilogy*, *Gone With the Wind*; and your editor has seen such films as *A Man For All Seasons*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars*. Why is there not a single work in the entire field of comic literature to compare with any of these?

Why indeed. The answer lies in the history of the comic book. The first comic books were merely anthologies of newspaper comic strips collected into a single binding. (Incidentally, the topic of these editorials is specifically the comic *book*, not the newspaper comic *strip*, which has a far longer history, and which by virute of the place accorded it in our daily newspapers has a far firmer position in the arts and in the public eye.) Newspaper strips exist for the entertainment of adults—the readers of the news papers, of course—and therefore so did the first comic books. But only a few years later, by, say, 1940, the prime focus of the comic book market was juvenile. Over those few years the shift is quite noticeable; exactly what caused it is obscure. (We would imagine the youth of those who were the prime movers of the field—Siegel and Schuster, Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and others—had much to do with it.) Comic books are naturally attractive to children because of their brightly-colored covers and their tendency to exaggeration and caricature, and there was certainly a ready market for them in the absence of television.

By 1949 everybody regarded comic books as *de facto* juvenile literature. In fact, various groups of people began to crusade against the grotesque violence and unwholesomeness of certain comics as inappropriate for children's consumption. Coincidentally, it was also the period of comics' greatest burst of creativity, when the work of those artists and writers regarded today as the most exceptional in the history of the medium came into full bloom. The names are comic books' Hall of Fame: Harvey Kurtzman, Will Elder, Wally Wood, Frank Frazetta, Roy Krenkel, Will Eisner, Reed Crandall, Jack Davis, Graham Ingels and many others.

Only a few years later, in 1954, the comic book detractors forced the comic book industry into the most stringent self-regulatory code of ethics found in any medium; namely, the one administered by the Comics Code Authority. The children of America were henceforth to be forever protected from undue violence and horror in the comic book medium. Unfortunately, they would also be protected from the work of the aforementioned persons.

The Comics Code made *de jure* a reality what originated only as a market trend, and comic books have since then been consigned to the juvenile scrap-heap. In addition, the U. S. Senate hearings and the book *Seduction of the Innocent* by child psychologist Frederic Wertham, condemning comic books in public, forever implanted in the minds of the parents of America the idea that comic books were corrosive trash to be ruthlessly extirpated from the libraries of their children. The creative artists and writers fled the medium in droves; they went on to "bigger and better things" like commercial art and *Playboy* magazine—and respectability. We can't blame them.

Comic books were a desert until the middle

1960's, which was the occasion of a kind of renaissance inspired largely by the rise of Marvel Comics. Again, innovative people were attracted to the medium: Jim Steranko, Jim Starlin, Roy Thomas, Steve Englehart, Steve Gerber, Mike Kaluta, Berni Wrightson, Don McGregor, Neal Adams. Artists and writers who persevered through the late 1950's in obscure books began to bloom as well: Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, John Buscema, Carmine Infantino. But today even this renaissance is largely over, and many of the persons mentioned have, again, gone on to "bigger and better things." They simply found that they could work more profitably in other areas of artistic and literary endeavor, while many disliked the evident bad production done with their work.

The fact that comic books fail to be as profitable a medium to work in as fine art, illustration or publishing, has led to the wholesale exodus of the most talented and most capable personnel from the field, more than once in its history. But these are *exactly* the people most likely to produce work of the kind so desperately needed to elevate the medium. These people see comic books not as an end in themselves but as a steppingstone to better paying careers elsewhere, as an artform in which they can serve an apprenticeship, honing their abilities before leaving it behind. Thus we have demonstrated our first vicious circle: the persons most able to improve comic books and draw in that much-needed public respect are the very ones who tend to leave it as quickly as possible.

The lack of public respect for comic books is a historical accident. There is no intrinsic flaw in the medium which dictates that comics themselves should not be the "bigger and better things" alluded to above.

There is enormous pressure on those professionals who have remained in comics to produce hack work rather than to innovate and experiment. This pressure is not necessarily due to any conscious editorial policy (although it might be); rather, it stems from the production and packaging of the medium itself. Every fan who confronts a professional at a convention soon comes up against the "profit motive" excuse: Comic books don't evolve because the parent company feels it would hurt *sales*. This, of course, is merely rationalization. Writing and drawing good comic books is a difficult job. There is no compelling need for professionals to produce good books if they can get by producing the same old stuff. And the fact that the comic book companies are always cutting corners in production everywhere they can reduces the incentive towards excellence even more. ("World Color Press and plastic plates are the worst thing to happen to comic books" was a professional opinion expressed at a panel at the 1977 San Diego Comic Convention.) It seems as if the general disrespect for comics extends right to the management of the conglomerates which currently own the comic book companies.

"What makes comic book collecting a small-time hobby is lack of public respect."

This situation contrasts sharply with the comic book scene in France, as an example, where comic books are held in high esteem by the reading public. One publisher in particular, Dargaud, produces books of outstanding excellence both in production quality and in content. These books are translated into many languages and distributed worldwide. Readers might be familiar with some of them: the *Asterix* series, the *Lucky Luke* series, the *Lone Sloan* series. The experimental magazine *Heavy Metal* publishes translated versions of Dargaud's *Metal Hurlant* in America, and may ultimately attract a significant enough market to effect the kind of global attitude change which would be congenial to comic book publishing. Their circulation certainly is high enough, as is the production quality.

Comic books in the United States have historically been printed to the cheapest possible standards, presumably on the theory that children rarely have much spending money, and that the unit price must be held low in order to get hold of as much of that spending money as possible. This has several detrimental consequences. First, the cost per page of artwork must be held to a minimum, which means that the artist and writer of a comic book are paid as little as possible for their work. Artists frequently note that the production of good artwork requires far more effort and time than any comics company is prepared to pay. Second, the distributors and retailers who sell comics to the general public make far less money per item than they make in handling other more expensive publications—which naturally makes them far less inclined to see that comic books are prominently displayed (and since the retailers and distributors are themselves part of the general public, they therefore suffer from the same prejudices against comic books, so that their lack of interest is heavily intensified). Third, a large fraction of the interior space of a comic book must be devoted to advertising—so much so that well over 40% of a typical comic book today carries no story. Fourth, adults who might happen to examine (and perhaps purchase) a comic book are often repelled by the crude package with which they are confronted. And fifth, the total number of personnel directly supported by the production of comic books is kept quite small, probably fewer than 300 people in some six publishing houses. Each of these consequences represents a self-actuating mechanism which, accentuated by the global economic inflation with its rising costs, contrives to keep the entire comic book industry a small-time operation.

Some of this is about to change, perhaps. Both of the two largest comic book publishers, realizing the situation (to some extent), have launched experimental publications in various different formats. Marvel Comics is currently observing the sales potential of its slick *Marvel Super-Special*, while DC Comics will revise its standard comic format in several directions with several different price tags. Both companies acknowledge a fundamental error in marketing strategy made during the 1950's, in which the inflationary trends were countered with a decrease in book size (from 48 pages to 32 pages) coupled with a constant cover price, rather than a constant book size coupled with an increased cover price. (This was probably not as bad a mistake as it was to permit the publication of very violent comics, thereby bringing down the wrath of the public; but the one was easily controlled and the other was not.) Another recent marketing strategy, practiced mainly by Marvel, is the publication of comic books with stories which adapt popular motion pictures or television shows, or which feature rock stars. These come with a built-in audience, and hopefully built-in sales. This strategy paid off spectacularly with *Star Wars*, probably the only comic books in history which have necessitated a second press run. But fad-linked comic books usually last only as long as the fad remains popular, or the television show remains on the air, or the rock group remains together. All of these factors are very fickle; control of the comic books passes from the hands of the comic book company to an even less certain realm. Payment of royalties for adaptations must also be a considerable financial drain, which comic books can ill afford. This editor also disagrees with the philosophy of publishing adaptations, because it cripples creativity. Comics can and should generate their own story concepts without having to go afield and use ones which are derivative. Most television shows are vacant, and it seems that an adaptation of a vacant television show would only result in a vacant comic. ■

Next issue the editorial will deal with comic fandom, and how certain fan attitudes and idiosyncrasies contrive to keep comic books from expanding creatively.

SALOON
BLUE BOOK SHERIFF
PRICE LISTS
COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDES

Conversation With Bob Overstreet

Ever wonder what a statistician employed by the forestry division of a large British-owned paper company, who doubles as a photographer, map reader and librarian does in his spare time? Easy. He compiles a comic book price guide and causes a revolution in comic fandom.

The history of comic collecting is easily and naturally divisible into two periods. Before there was a Comic Book Price Guide, *the market value of even the rarest and most expensive comic books stood at only a couple of hundred dollars, and most comics frequently sold for nickels and dimes. After the publication of the* Price Guide *and its wide distribution, the market values of scarce back issue comics rose exponentially, dealers became increasingly firm in their asking prices, and cheap comic books in general seemed to have become a thing of the past.*

The Price Guide *itself is essentially nothing nore than a catalogue of American comic books. Each year, usually during April, a brand new edition is printed. Every known title and issue number are listed, together with a range of prices for each issue number in each of three different grades of condition. The* Price Guide *also catalogues the work of many collectible artists and carries much incidental publication information. It is the multitude of facts which are summarized on its pages which makes the* Comic Book Price Guide *a formidable and practically indispensable reference tool for the comic collector.*

The first edition of the Price Guide *appeared in 1970. It was greeted with universal acclaim from both dealers and collectors alike, and even spawned several short-lived imitations. Comic book collectors with all their varied interests and specialties united to correct the numerous errors in the first edition, and comic book indexers and researchers opened their personally compiled data files, often representing years of work, to the* Price Guide *in the interests of accuracy and completeness. The first edition sold out rapidly, as did a second printing of the same edition a year later.*

Most of the gross errors in the first Price Guide *were corrected in the second edition, printed in 1972. Where the first* Price Guide *was saddle bound with staples, the second edition was bound in signatures; and where the first* Price Guide *had only a black and white cover [black and blue in the second printing], the cover of the second edition was in full color. In every way the second edition was a vast improvement over the first. Of course, there were still numerous mistakes in the more obscure and less frequently collected titles [some of which remain even in the latest edition], but these were not as serious, and were surely correctable in future editions as more data became available.*

There was another way in which the second edition differed from the first. Almost without exception, the prices were higher. *Initially, most collectors saw this as the natural state of affairs. They were gratified to see their collections increase in value, as they "obviously" should, since they were some years older and since the number of comic collectors presumably was increasing. Many collectors began to claim that comic collecting was not just fun but a "good investment", too.*

With each new edition, the Price Guide *increased its influence over comic collecting. Each edition represented an improvement in quality and accuracy over its predecessors, and in each new issue the prices crept ever higher. After a while, collectors were no longer gratified with each new edition's price rises, because it began to mean that the books they still needed might pass forever out of their reach, that the ever-higher prices might discourage would-be collectors from gaining a foothood in the hobby, and that the main emphasis of the field was shifting from the aesthetic value of the books to their monetary value. Other collectors began to argue that the* Price Guide *and its manner of compilation encouraged dealers to pad their "for sale" lists with artificially inflated prices, in order that the higher prices be given a measure of legitimacy by being reflected in the next edition of the* Guide. *In short, many collectors began to resent the* Price Guide *because they felt that as a result of its all-pervasive influence, control of the field of comic collecting seemed to have passed from the hands of the comic collectors into the hands of the comic dealers.*

Now, after seven years of publication, the Price Guide *has proved spectacularly successful. Originally sold by mail order and through comic book specialty stores, the* Price Guide *was given nationwide distribution through Crown Publishing Co. with its sixth edition, so that it is now available in standard book stores as well. With a circulation worldwide of over 40,000 copies, it could well be the most successful fan project of all time.*

The person behind the Price Guide *from its inception is Bob Overstreet.*

©1978 Robert M. Overstreet

Overstreet has been a comic book collector since the early 1950's. He started the Price Guide *as an effort to bring the extensive market knowledge he had accumulated in his years of buying back issues into the public domain, where it would be freely available to any interested party. We were able to meet Bob Overstreet at the 1977 San Diego Comic Convention, and since we were there with all our cameras and interviewing equipment, it was only natural that we set up a* Collector's Dream *interview with him.*

Everything about Bob's physical presence can be described using the term "medium". He is of medium height and build, middle-aged with some grey streaking his otherwise dark hair, and he speaks with the soft midwestern drawl of a native of Tennessee. His speech is characterized by frequent non sequiturs *and a rambling cohesiveness difficult to capture in print, so that some editing of the transcript of the interview had to take place. A bit shy at first, he quickly opened up to us once the discussion got underway.*

In the final analysis, we believe, after spending several hours with him, that Bob is scrupulously honest, fair and diligent in his compilation of the Price Guide, *and that the prices listed therein are as realistic as can be determined by anybody anywhere. In particular, he is well aware of the problems inherent in correlating market statistics on thousands of comic books offered for sale by hundreds of different dealers [of varying degrees of honesty] to arrive at a single listing for each comic. We have been unable to unearth any evidence whatsoever that the* Price Guide *is being used to manipulate the comic book market, and we know that Bob is fully cognizant of his publication's enormous influence over the field and of his responsibility to comic fans everywhere.*

George Olshevsky: Bob Overstreet, you publish regularly, once a year, the *Comic Book Price Guide*. This book has had a profound influence over the monetary aspect of comic fandom over the past half decade at least. How did you come to produce this book?

Bob Overstreet: Well, I've been a comic collector since 1952. I started with the EC movement at that time. I bought EC's off the stands then, and I still have most of my original set even now. Some back issues I bought from comic dealers as early as 1953 and 1954, and I kept them all.

After high school I married and settled down, and forgot about comic collecting for about six years. Then around 1960 or 1961 I came back to comics. I decided it would be a good time to fill in my EC collection and complete the set; I still lacked a lot of the early issues. I joined Science Fiction Fandom then, and through my activities found other comic collectors and began to correspond with them. I started to collect EC's once again. Then some of my correspondents got me interested in the Golden Age hero comics, and I branched out until I was collecting just about everything. By the late 1960's I could see a real need for a price guide.

Back in the 1950's I used to be in coins, and I remember the impact *Yeoman's Red Book* had on me and how it helped me to learn the market. Using that as a model, I typed up some rough ideas of what I thought a price guide for comics should look like. I went to Bob Jennings, who was publishing *Comic World* in Nashville, and asked him if he thought it would be a good idea. I tried to talk him into putting it out, since he was already publishing fanzines and had some experience.

Well, Bob didn't think it was a good idea; he didn't think it would work. So I went to Jerry Bails. By then I had a pretty good idea of what the price guide should look like, and I wrote Bails. Bails said that he didn't have the time to do it, but he would help me if I needed it. That gave me the impetus to go ahead and do it.

I had price lists from practically every dealer from the early 1960's, Rogofsky's, Claude Held's, and all the *RBCC* issues. So I went through everything I had, compiling a list of titles. Bails had just published his *Collector's Guide to the First Heroic Age*, which listed all the Golden Age heroes and what comics they appeared in, and which proved to be a tremendous source of information. Probably the *Price Guide* wouldn't have been possible if Bails hadn't published that source book.

"I discuss the philosophy of grading all year long with dealers and collectors, and I always try to put a fair price on what I think a comic is actually worth."

But he only listed the 1940's hero comics. The 1930's stuff, the romance comics, everything from the late 1940's up, the funny animals, I had to pick up myself. I pulled all this information out of all the dealer lists that I had; that's what went into the initial *Price Guide*. I sold it at a pre-publication price, and I sold advertising, and it practically paid for itself. I had the printing bill raised before I went to press with the first book, and I've never had to put any of my own money into it. From then on, it's been like having a tiger by the tail just trying to keep up with it. It's grown by leaps and bounds!

G.: The *Price Guide* is the most complete and accurate listing of comic books that has ever been published, but it took seven years before the list could be said to have become very accurate in an absolute sense. What has the feedback been like from fans and correspondents? Do people cooperate in trying to get the listings as accurate as possible?

B.: Well, last year I received more information from fans and professionals than I did in all the years before put together. I was swamped with it! This year it's slowed down somewhat from last, but most of the information comes in at the end of the year when I'm cutting off and starting to produce the book. Since most people wait until the end of the year to send the information in, which is a bad time, I often have to wait a year to incorporate it into the *Guide*. There were some one hundred letters of corrections that I received last fall that couldn't go into this year's book. I had to publish the book knowing that there were still a lot of mistakes in it that wouldn't be corrected until next year. It just can't be helped.

G.: That's something like the *Marvel Comics Index*. I received a whole lot of corrections for Part Three, but Part Four was already set. So I couldn't do anything about them until Part Five.

B.: Or the Mickey Mouse serials in the back of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*. I listed those serials for two years, and it never was a complete, correct listing. I kept getting corrections in the mail. Someday I'll probably run that listing again, hopefully completely correct.

G.: How do you arrive at the prices in the *Guide?* Are they averages of dealer lists? How would you arrive at a price for a book that's almost never offered for sale through one of these lists? And how can you tell that mint condition books should sell for triple the price of good condition books? There must be some kind of statistical procedure...

B.: The really rare books usually don't even make it to a dealer's list. Historically, they're sold from one person to another. When they turn up, the dealer who gets one almost always already knows a person who is interested in the book and how much he would be willing to pay. Over the years, I've been in touch with a large number of dealers who turn up the rare books, and I know in many cases which books are sold and what is paid for them. Besides the dealer calling me up, the person who buys the book himself writes me and tells me what book he bought and from whom and for how much, so this often substantiates the dealer's story. I pick up a lot of this kind of information traveling to conventions around the country.

Now, on books for which there's no information, I usually have to interpret the market. The Timelys have been real hot sellers for the last two or three years, for example. If there's a rare Timely that I have no sales information on, but I know that the trend in rare Timelys is that they have gone up 50% across the board, then I can certainly assume that the comic in question would also have gone up 50%, had a copy actually been sold. I use a lot of judgment and statistical averaging on such books, because I feel I have an obligation to anyone who buys my book to set a price which really reflects what I

Photo by Tony Fruttl

"Well, I've been a comic collector since 1952."

Photo by Tony Frutti

"I think it's detrimental for anyone who has information...to refuse to let anyone else know about it."

think he will have to pay.

Sometimes on the really rare books I just list the sale price if there's been just one sale all year, or a numerical average if there have been only two or three sales. I did this with *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly*, for example. Other books will be handled that way in the future as they become scarcer and scarcer and as the number of sales decreases. I'll just list what the last known sale was and leave it at that.

We have a similar information problem with the "junk comics", the ones you find in dime boxes and things like that. There's very little record of how they're selling and what they might actually be worth. I have a tendency to list them low, but I don't really know if they're selling at those prices, or higher, or lower. I just keep those books on a low level from year to year; I don't really expect their prices to change, but there just isn't enough market input for me to be absolutely sure.

I discuss the philosophy of pricing all year long with dealers and collectors, and I always try to put a fair price on what I think a comic is actually worth.

Tony Frutti: Could you talk to us about what safeguards you have which preclude or at least minimize the possibility of dealers artificially raising their prices, in the hopes that these artificially raised prices will find their way into the *Guide* and gain some legitimacy?

B.: I guess the fastest selling and most collectible comics would have to be the Silver Age comics, you know, the early 1960's Marvels and the 1950's DC's. Probably 80% of the total comic book market lies in Silver Age books. The demand is high, and this is why the prices on those books climb the fastest. The Golden Age market is already very high, so the prices on those books probably won't grow at the same rapid pace as Silver Age books.

Now, the market in Silver Age books is very volatile. *Fantastic Four* No. 1 is priced in dealer lists at anywhere from $300 to $1000 in mint condition, which is a very wide range. So the *Price Guide* has to be very careful in analyzing a market which is changing this rapidly. We have to use sound judgment at the end of the year as to just what the average selling prices of these books will be. In the case of *FF* No. 1, it's listed at $360 in the current *Price Guide*, and its average price now is probably $400-$500. I know of offers that have been made as high as $750 cash for a mint copy, and we'll probably see a copy sell for $1000 by the end of the year. So this book is in high demand and some dealers try to get as much money as possible for it and ask these really high prices. It's easy to ask a high price, especially when you don't really want to sell a book!

I realize all this when I study the market. When I put together the prices in the *Guide*, I don't usually pick the low extremes or the high extremes. What I'm interested in is what the *majority* of the dealers are *getting* for any particular book. Sometimes this information is hard to get, but I do have dealers who are sending me their lists as to what is actually selling and how many orders they get for any particular book, on a monthly basis. Anyhow, I have a tendency to list volatile books like the Silver Age comics on a somewhat lower and more moderate keel, and try to keep the market growing at a slower pace. I know that if I were to put something like *FF* No. 1 in the *Price Guide* at $1000, this would escalate the price on the book far too fast, to where the price would be way over the demand, to where it would just stop selling. You have to try to keep the prices balanced with the demand on all books, which is hard to do, but it's far more realistic.

Now, the main reason I put out the *Price Guide* to begin with, way back in 1970, was that I'm a long time collector of comic books. I was trying to learn about Golden Age comics, and I just didn't know very much about the Golden Age back in the early 1960's. I started compiling lists of all the special issues, the origin issues. This list just kept on growing, growing, growing, and I had to keep carrying it around with me for reference. The list became endless. So I put out the *Price Guide* to get all this information into print in book form, so that I had a complete reference work to *all* the comic books, listed alphabetically, where I could look up whatever I needed to know about each book I might want for my collection. After publishing the *Guide* for seven years, we've turned up a tremendous amount of information on special artists and even on titles that weren't known to exist. This helps the collector in making him aware of what there is out there in the market that he might want to collect. He can go through the *Guide* and make up his own want list from it.

For instance, I think it's detrimental for anyone who has information on, say, Frazetta or Williamson or another highly collected and desired artist, to refuse to let anyone else know about it, not to share this information with other Frazetta or Williamson collectors.

G.: I certainly feel that that's very selfish...

B.: It's a very selfish attitude. Such information should be made public knowledge, so that all the potential Frazetta collectors or whoever will know that such a book exists. They might have to pay some more to get it, but if they don't know it exists, how are they ever going to find it? The chance of a collector rummaging through a junk box and finding such a book on his own is very low, practically zero, because it's usually a pretty rare book to begin with. But if they know of the title, they might order it from a dealer's list.

G.: Speaking of things like that, did you know that there is a Sun Girl story in *Marvel Tales* No. 97?

B.: If it's not in the *Guide*, then I probably don't know it. Everything I know about comics winds up in the *Guide*.

G.: Yes, a two page story; the Good Girl Art and super heroine collectors might be interested. Jim Vadeboncoeur turned

that up just last year.

B.: Let me say something more about pricing. As a result of the feedback we've been getting at the conventions, this year's *Price Guide* has seen a lowering of the prices of books in good condition, because most of the dealers I've been talking with, especially on the East Coast, haven't been selling books in good and very good conditions, particularly the Golden Age books. Silver Age books are still selling in good and very good, but much more weakly than in fine and mint. This was becoming something of a problem, because a lot of people were losing confidence in the comic market as a whole. So we spread out the range of prices with respect to condition on each book. Right now our spread is 1, 2, 3 for good, fine, mint; but we might have to go to 1, 2, 4 or something else like that in future editions. Take, for instance, *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* No. 1. Everybody has a copy in good condition to sell these days, and they can't even get the good price of about $400 for it. It's a slow mover. But a copy of that book in mint condition is really rare, and might bring $2500 to $3000 right now, if one were to turn up. So there's a range of well over triple. And you have the same thing with *Four Color* No. 9, which is very common, so to speak, in good and very good, but might bring $1800 or so in mint. And there are other books like *Captain Marvel* No 1 which are extremely rare in mint condition, which might not even exist in mint condition, and which might have very high mint prices.

Next year I might start to spread the good to mint range of books like *Marvel* No. 1 and *Action* No. 1 by more than triple. Either of those two books in mint condition would probably bring $9000 to $10,000 right now. I know of a genuine offer of $11,000 for a perfect mint *Action* No. 1 if there is one in existence. But, I'd keep the good prices on those books roughly the same as this year, because they're just not as much in demand.

G.: In a way, this is all to the good. Those who just want the books and don't care about condition can pick them up in good for what is more than likely a reasonable and fair price, but the screaming mint freaks get to pay through the nose. It surely separates the readers from the speculators.

B.: It would have that effect, I guess.

T.: Are you thinking of dropping the good prices on recent comics, since most of them are in mint or at least fine to very fine condition anyway?

B.: That's done in coins. For recent coins they only list the uncirculated price because all the other conditions are so common. I think I might do that with recent comics because they're simply not collected in good condition.

G.: Speaking of the prices in the *Red Book*, I had occasion to look through a copy recently, and noticed that on some coins at least the prices ranged from something like $30 in good condition to $900 in uncirculated—a thirty-fold price spread. Does it look likely that a similar situation will arise with comics, with the mint books going for twenty and thirty times the good condition books?

B.: In coins there is good statistical information available, because practically every sale is recorded, and there are actually only a few hundred or so different items. With comics we're dealing with hundreds of thousands of items, all in different grades, for which many transactions are never recorded. I don't see how, at this stage of the game, one could ever get good averages for all comic books. I would have to determine, for example, the rarity of each grade for each issue, a statistic which simply can't be determined right now.

If you have a comic like *The Blob* No. 6 at 20 cents in good, $5.00 in fine and $300 in mint, this would certainly make for a chaotic market. One would need a *Price Guide* to do *anything;* at least now there is some order in the price and people can understand the system, and there's some uniformity. With the very few rare books, like *Marvel* No. 1, you can make exceptions, but those are the books that people are most likely to consult the *Price Guide* for anyway.

G.: *Marvel* No. 1—that's a really scarce item. I only know of one really genuine just about perfect mint copy, the one owned by Mile High Comics. I suppose more might turn up someday, but for now that's the only one.

B.: Even that one's not really mint. Chuck Rozanski told me it was near mint, but his near mint is pretty tight.

G.: There are probably some trivial things wrong with it, little nicks or some such...

B.: It's even trimmed correctly on the inside. All the copies for some reason have one or two signatures which are bound crooked, so that the trimming cuts into the panels somewhere. I've got a copy that's almost perfect, but it's really likely that no perfect copy exists. The cover stock, just by being folded around the staples, by going through the folding machine, gets a white line along the spine, or sometimes even splits at the top and bottom. It's like that with *Captain Marvel* No. 1. The book may not exist in perfect condition because of the cover.

G.: Who does the production on the *Price Guide?*

B.: Well, my wife spends full time combing through the *Buyer's Guide* ads. She looks up every comic book listed, then records the information in a Master Price Guide. She does this for three solid months in the fall, usually beginning around August 1. This gives us a tremendous weight factor when I'm setting prices. At the end of the year, I look at all the work she has done, and I can see the high-low range of what the books have been listed for in the *Buyer's Guide* over a period of three months. This tells me whether the market has moved up or down on any particular book, and whether dealers are charging more or less than *Price Guide*. Besides all this, of course, I have information from correspondents, conventions and such, and

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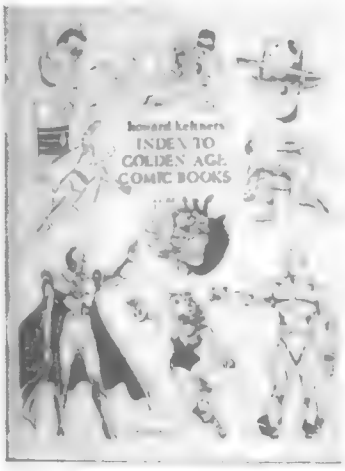

INDEX TO GOLDEN AGE COMIC BOOKS

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information from a few expert dealers who go to all the conventions, who sell comics all the time and who specialize in different fields. I have mail-order information—the mail-order field is completely different from the convention business, incidentally. The end result, I think, is some pretty accurate overall market figures. We might miss on a few books, but we're basically pretty close most of the time. If anything, I try to have a tendency to be *under* the market instead of over. And there are certain dealers like Rogofsky and others who are completely ruled out when their prices go above the norm. We don't even consider them.

T.: You don't consider Rogofsky's price lists at all?

B.: No, not at all. You see, he's got his own clientele, his own market. He sells his books for his own prices. What I'm trying to tell the average collector is that with a little digging they can buy their books for the prices listed in the *Price Guide*. If they go to conventions or if they deal with dealers who advertise in the *Price Guide*, then they won't have to pay such high prices. (*Ed. Note: See our mail-order dealer survey elsewhere in this issue of* Collector's Dream.)

Anyway, we get all the prices averaged, and then sometime in October I set the prices. It takes me about two weeks to set the prices on the whole market once I get all the information spread out in front of me. About November 1 my wife begins typesetting the body of the *Guide*. I also have an English major who typesets the preliminary sections of the *Guide* on a $20,000 IBM composer at the State University located in Cleveland (Tennessee). He teaches journalism there, and he's helped a lot over the past three or four years on the *Guide*.

While my wife is typesetting, I work at a regular job during the day. Then at night I do all the layouts. We proofread everything and have all the paste-ups ready by New Year's Day. Then I have a camera man in Cleveland shoot all the pages down and make negatives, and make my halftones. My wife and I strip in the halftones and opaque the negatives ourselves; we can't really hire that out because no one would be able to place the halftones of the covers in their proper places.

"The Price Guide does influence the market in many ways, and it certainly can be inflationary."

G.: It sounds almost exactly like what we do with the *Marvel Index*.

B.: It just occurred to me that next month I have to get all my sheets back and peel the halftones off and put them back in the files for the next *Guide*. That's several weeks' work right there. We've got a tremendous file of cover photographs. I make several trips and photograph dealer stock each year for the new *Price Guide*; I'm always looking for a new roster of covers to run each year. We've already shot 1000 new covers this year, and I have to identify them, write their identifications on the backs, cut them up, file and index them in time for next year's book. So I have a lot of work waiting for me when I get back home from San Diego.

T.: You do all this part time?

B.: Oh, yes!

Next year, we're featuring Women In Comics, and I have a detailed article on the history of Women In Comics coming in, due right about now. I have to proof and edit it, and it might have to be rewritten yet.

G.: This isn't just Good Girl Art, but the whole spectrum, right?

B.: Yes. We'll cover the entire field, perhaps back to the weird hero pulps where it all began, and trace it right through to today. There are a lot of covers; women have been exploited in so many ways, and we want to go into all the angles if possible. I'll try to run the section in color if I can; I should have as much color next year as I did this year. It also looks as if I'll be selling more color ads, too.

G.: After all the dealers saw Burrel's ad, drawn by Barr...

B.: Let me also say that last year when I did the color section on Barks, I didn't have to run all that color, but being a Barks fan I wanted to do it right. It's never been done before, and Walt Disney Productions may never give permission to do it in the future. I ran all the color I could, which cost me $15,000 for the separations and printing. Besides that, the book grew, and I had a fair increase in my printing costs not even counting the color section. Even so, I only increased the price of the *Guide* by 45 cents.

G.: Do you envision a time when the book will have to be in two volumes?

B.: Yes, eventually it will happen, but I'll try to hold the line as long as I can. *Scott's Stamp Catalogue*, for example, is printed on Bible paper, which is very thin. They can get 1000 pages into one binding. I want to keep it to one binding because my costs would be much lower, and it's cheaper for the fan, too, since he only has to buy one book. I should be able to hold the line for several years yet, if I use Bible paper.

T.: A real authentic Collector's Bible, all right!

B.: Last year Crown Publishing sent me a presentation copy of the *Price Guide* with gold sprinkled on top and a strip of cloth bound in, so that it looked like a real Bible. That was for Christmas last year.

T.: What type of camera do you use for your covers?

B.: I have a Canon—1.2 lens. And a copy stand, a tripod and floodlights. I shoot a lot of stuff at home. For instance, Bruce

Hamilton on two occasions stopped over at our house with some collections he had bought, and we stayed up all night shooting covers. He's helped me a great deal on getting covers of the rare books and sends along many pictures he shoots himself. People everywhere help out with the covers.

G.: When we did the *Marvel Index*, we would take each cover, shoot a photograph, get a nice 5 x 7" positive and have that halftoned and reduced to fit in. Since then, we have managed to get access to a huge $60,000 gang camera, with which we can shoot nine covers at a time and create the halftones right from the books. Is there any possibility that you might be able to get hold of something like that?

B.: What I do is shoot four covers at a time, which fill a 35 mm. frame sideways. All my picture files are organized that way, and I get four pictures to the negative, which helps keep my costs down. I have to have them custom processed, but it winds up costing only about 10 cents per picture. Some aren't clear enough; we always have waste. When we finally go to the printer about the first of February, we give him the negatives ready to mask up and burn the plates. You can see, we do all the work ourselves, which saves us money and keeps the quality of the book high.

G.: This all sounds so terribly familiar! Originally we asked the printer to do all our layouts and everything, and it wound up costing us a mint over and above being overcharged for practically everything. And the results were only routine, or worse. For the fourth *Index* we had to sever relations with the printer, who was doing absolutely no work at all, and I drove down to Illinois on my motorcycle with all the paste-ups to our new printer. I stripped in all the photographs myself in one day, something our printer used to charge us hundreds of dollars for. Do you find you have lots of trouble with your printers?

B.: I had tremendous problems with printers until I found this one in Nashville! He's met every deadline and gives me red carpet treatment; he air-freights all my stuff when it's ready. Once the books come into my garage from the bindery—about 15,000 of them—we have a big neighborhood party with all the kids in the neighborhood. We wrap books over a weekend and then we mail them out.

T.: And Crown handles the rest of them.

B.: Yes. Crown orders 20,000 books, which are shipped direct from my printer, who also ships direct to all my large accounts. I have some other big distributors besides Crown, whose orders are put on skids and shipped direct. The smaller orders I ship out by U.P.S.

Producing the *Guide* is getting to be such a job! It's practically a full time job handling the mail and the questions which come in. I spend much time contacting cover artists and getting articles written way in advance. I have about 10 covers laid out right now; on most covers I do the initial layout myself. I decide what subject I want, and I have an extensive comic collection from which I can draw ideas. For instance, I laid out the Barks cover this year, then Carl took my rough and made a beautiful picture out of it. He put all the magic into it; that's his tremendous talent.

We're also thinking about buying a small computer either this fall or early next year to carry all our data. I'll do all the editing and updating through the computer, which will have a large screen on which I can display a whole page at once. All the additions and corrections would be recorded on tape, and I could keep the tape current as all the new information comes in. When we're ready to print, I'd make up a tape and mail it to a computer printing outfit—there's a big one in Phoenix, for instance. They would print my galleys just like that and mail them back to me. This would eliminate all the reproofing every year, and should give my wife a couple of months off when she could be doing more important things.

T.: I hope you're paying her well for this!

B.: Oh, I give her a 100% raise every year: one hundred per cent of nothing is still nothing. (All laugh.)

G.: You must have some anecdotes to tell about the production of those first *Price Guides*, before everything became streamlined.

B.: Well, the first printer I went to was a small jackleg printer who quoted me a cheap price. Now, I had known this man all my life. He used to work for my father, who was the publisher of a newspaper in Cleveland. I thought I could trust this printer, that he would do a good job, since he felt almost like a member of the family. He produced the book and shot the negatives; but to get him to do it I had to go down to his darkroom every night. Then I had to help him process the negatives and run them through the trays. He told me what had to be done, and I did the work from scratch. I really didn't know the printing business.

He had a multilith press and we ran the book off on it, one page at a time. Then he brought them to my house and dumped them in the garage. I had to collate them all myself. He lent me a stapling machine so that I could staple all the books together once they were collated. The whole family was collating and stapling for weeks. That was my introduction to the printing business.

Now, I didn't like having to do all the work with my first printer, so I decided that I would find another printer who would treat me better. I went across town to this other printer, who was about twice as large. I thought he would do a better job. Well, he gave me a good quote, but I had to pay him about half down by the time we were ready to burn plates. I paid him; and then he started slowing down. He would come up with these wild stories... (G&T both laughing uproariously)...as to why he didn't have it ready yet. He'd keep promising faithfully that he'd have it done in two or three days and he'd tell me not to worry about it. Then I'd call him and something else

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Photo by Tony Frutti

"I'm trying to tell the average collectors that with a little digging, they can buy their books for the prices listed in the Price Guide, or even less."

would have gone wrong: the press broke down, or the truck broke down...

T.: Or the paper didn't come in!

B.: Yeah, the paper. He's still waiting for the paper.

T.: Are you sure you didn't use the same printer we did?

B.: I kept on calling and calling him. My ads were already out in *RBCC*. I had the *Price Guide* advertised way in advance, it was running 30 days late and it still hadn't been printed. Finally, after constant harassment on my part, he got it printed. But then we had the problem of folding the huge pages down—he printed it 16 pages to a sheet. I had to go out there and learn how to use this big folding machine, and I folded the whole print run myself to get it done. The way things were set up, he was to have done all that himself.

Finally he started doing the collating, and he had people there collating who were friends of the company, or people he knew, or just anybody who happened to walk in off the street. College students who would just walk in and start collating the *Guide*. We had 42 stacks of signatures that had to be put together into one book. As he got them collated, I would bind them by hand. I went to some binderies and learned what glue to use and how to do it, and I hand bound each copy. He showed me how to use his trimmer, and I trimmed them myself, too.

The first two or three hundred copies we mailed out came back because the signatures had been collated all wrong ...(G&T both laughing uproariously)... so I stopped all the people from doing any more collating and brought my family in. We picked it up from there and collated the rest of the books ourselves. We bound each book by hand, and we bound them as the orders came in. The printer gave us the key to the shop, and we'd go in and bind and trim them and put them in the mail the next day. The glue was still wet on the spines as the books went in the mail.

T.: So that explains why there were all those defective copies of the second edition.

B.: Right. They were all a little wrinkled and weren't perfectly done. They were done by hand. The books wouldn't stay open and the spines would crack. People would complain and then they would find out that there wasn't anything that could be done because they were all like that. But I sold enough books that year that I could afford to go to a big printer the next year, and pay the high price and get it done right. I went to Nashville, found a good printer and I've been with him ever since. We've had excellent work from him, no problems at all.

G.: We're hoping the printer in Illinois that we found will be like that. He's got these huge web offset presses.

B.: I think a lot of it depends on how big an account you are. If you're a big account, the printer will treat you nice; if you're a small account, he'll shove you aside and you'll have to wait and wait.

G.: Our ex-printer treated us like that: he would run everybody else first. Our books kept getting more and more delayed, with more and more excuses. We finally decided to ditch him completely. He was just no good at all.

Now let's get onto a different topic. There has been a fair amount of bad press given to the *Price Guide* in recent times. Some comic fans regularly print letters in fan magazines saying things like they won't ever use the *Price Guide* or support it in any way. How do you feel about people like that? Do you feel that they hurt your market? That they're reactionary or out of it? Or do you feel that they have a valid complaint, that the *Price Guide* unduly influences and extends inflation?

B.: I don't think that there is any doubt in anybody's mind that the *Price Guide*, in producing regular market information each year on a nationwide basis, makes everybody more knowledgeable. In pre-*Price Guide* days, nobody really *knew*, and information was shared only by a select few individuals. Things were much more chaotic and unstable than they are today.

The *Price Guide* does influence the market in many ways, and it certainly can be inflationary. For instance, a dealer whose comics are priced below *Guide* often feels compelled to bring his prices up so that they are in line with the *Guide*.

But in those few instances where the *Guide* is underpriced, dealers won't keep their prices down just for that reason. I've seen many books sell for two and three times *Guide* when it is that far off on some books. Often you can see dealers going around at conventions buying up books and paying *Guide* prices because they know they can get double *Guide* or better for those books. Those are the really shrewd dealers, who really know their market and who keep up with the latest trends. It's things like this that I try to look out for, and which cause big changes to the *Guide* prices each year.

G.: I find it very difficult to disentangle cause and effect. I believe I've stated editorially on several occasions that the *Price Guide* itself is not a really significant cause of inflation. It is far more a reflection of trends, an illustration of inflation, an effect, if you will, than it is a cause. But I've had letters from people which maintain that your *Guide* manufactures trends. For example, two years ago you ran the section on Good Girl Art. And all of a sudden, comic book dealers everywhere began to dredge up their piles of unsalable old romance titles, put high price tags on them, and did a land office business. And this year you ran the piece on esoteric comics, which seems to take care of just about every other kind of comic that doesn't fall into an already established category, and we might expect the prices to start going up on those books as well. Do you have any comments on this?

B.: Actually, Good Girl Art comics have been collected for many years. Prime examples are *Torchy* and *Phantom Lady*. They are rare books which seldom turn

up for sale, and they've been bringing high prices ever since the first edition of the *Guide*. *Phantom Lady* No. 1 stood at around $9.00 in mint condition in that *Guide*, and now it's about $120. It might just double in next year's *Guide*, but I can't say for certain until all the figures are in. *Phantom Lady* comics are all bringing in two or three times *Guide* this year.

Our emphasis on esoteric art in the *Guide* is that the material has no real value, but it's interesting to see what different publishers did, perhaps taking a book out of context, or with an unusual cover or something like that. I don't think that esoteric comics are really worth anything, with rare exceptions like *Reform School Girl* or *Teen-Age Dope Slaves*, which are true esoteric comics, but which were popular and expensive long before people knew what esoteric art was.

The article on esoteric comics was written by Scott Shaw, but it was originally very long and it was condensed by Carl Macek. A lot of material was left out and it probably would have been much more interesting had we been able to run the whole thing. I don't think people were trying to benefit personally from this article, by boosting the prices on their stocks of esoteric comics. We were just trying to identify and define one of the smaller facets of the hobby. It was run as a secondary filler article, but it was looked at the wrong way by some people.

G.: Would you say that publishing such articles in the *Guide*, because of its wide distribution, accelerates such trends unduly?

B.: Well, there are trends which have been developing in the market for several years, and there was enough interest shown in Good Girl Art and esoteric comics that we felt it was time to run some articles about them. I always try to run articles which are interesting and timely in order to help sell the *Guide*. I'm obviously interested in selling the *Guide!*

G.: Speaking of which, just how many have you been selling?

B.: I sold about 1800 copies of the first edition, give or take a couple of hundred. The second edition doubled that, selling about 3800 copies altogether. You'll recall the problems I had hand-binding all those copies? With the third edition we went to the printer in Nashville. The book was professionally bound for the first time, and the circulation doubled again. Last year I contacted Crown Publishing in New York to get nationwide distribution. I mailed them a copy of the book and they were instantly sold on it—they called me on the phone the next day and ordered 10,000 copies when I only had 2000 left. The circulation that year tripled due to Crown; we went from 15,000 on the fifth edition to 41,000 on the sixth edition. Now I have a five year contract with Crown. They will be distributing my book under this contract for five years, and then we will renew it one year at a time. I think I'll be with them for a long time. We get along very well and they do a good job distributing the books.

G.: Do you figure that is an adequate assessment of the size of comic fandom today?

B.: I think it's actually much bigger than the market I'm reaching. There are still many more collectors than I'm reaching through my distribution channels. There are still many book stores that Crown doesn't get to; I don't know how much of the market they're saturating, but it might be something like 20-30%. I think there are at least 100,000 collectors in this country, and I want to reach them all. I think we will as time goes on.

There are also many nostalgia shops opening up across the country. I supply books to those places. There are many stores expanding, especially on the West Coast. Bud Plant has four stores, Pacific Comics has three or four stores, and this growth will attract and create many more comic collectors. There is much cross-over between comics and movies and magazine publishing. For the first time since I published the *Price Guide*, I've been contacted by professionals in the comic book field, writers and artists wanting their work outlined in the *Guide*. Eventually it's going to be a problem to tell some of the more obscure writers and artists that are not highly collectible that there is just not enough space in the *Price Guide* to list their work. I've had long lists of data sent in by some of

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these people, wanting their work credited.

I guess that's why I had the Barks cover this year; I didn't even have an art cover four years ago. When will I be able to have a Frazetta cover? I guess when I can raise about $30,000. Probably the only way he would do a cover would be if *he* wanted to do it. He's the only giant artist left that I could get.

T.: There must be someone special on your mind...

B.: Well, maybe Norman Rockwell! I've thought about asking him to do something like a *Saturday Evening Post* cover, or a painting of a 1940's drug store scene with Archie and the gang done in the Rockwell style. That would be nice, and it would really elevate the *Guide*. Archie is popular across the country, and this is another aspect I have to give thought to when I plan a *Guide*: What should be featured on the covers and what should be featured on the inside should not just be of interest to the comic fans but also to the people who regularly browse around book stores. As much as half my market is such people, and I have to produce material that they will buy as well as material for the hard core comic collector.

G.: As much as half your market consists of casual browsers? That surprises me.

B.: Oh, yes! So I've got to temper what I do. I tried to do that in the color section I ran this year, among other things, when I ran covers of Dick Tracy, Little Orphan Annie and others, because they're well known to the average man in the street.

G.: I enjoyed the color sections in the 1977 *Price Guide*. They are certainly a beautiful addition.

B.: Tremendously! I've always wanted to run color myself because I'm a comic collector and I enjoy seeing color on rare books. But I was never able to afford it until last year.

But I'm a Barks fan, and since I got permission to do the Barks section, I decided to go all out.

Incidentally, getting permission to do the Barks section was almost impossible. There were three big hurdles that had to be conquered before I could do it. The biggest hurdle was to get Carl to do the cover. He had a long list of people that he was doing paintings for, but I was finally able to get one done. The next problem was to obtain permission from Walt Disney Productions to run the Barks article, which also seemed impossible because they had never allowed anybody to do it before. After two years talking to Walt Disney Productions on the phone—they really liked my book, by the way—they let me write the Disney piece, And I wanted a Disney cover, but they wouldn't permit me to run one, so the next best thing was the Porky Pig cover. They could have refused entirely, but it all worked out. So I never did surmount that third hurdle, but it turned out to be rather unimportant after all.

Soon I want to run a Little Lulu cover and a Little Lulu section with John Stanley in it. Warner Brothers owns the

"The Price Guide, in producing regular market information each year on a nationwide basis, makes everybody more knowledgable."

copyright to Little Lulu and I already have permission from them—after a fair amount of correspondence.

G.: What kinds of problems do you have selling the *Price Guide* outside the U.S.A.? Some stores in Canada, for example, have this really high markup on the cover price because of customs duties.

B.: Well, Canada is a good source of business. There are many collectors in Canada and I want to sell books in Canada. But there are many problems in getting books across the border. I don't think you have problems bringing books into the United States from Canada, for instance.

G.: Very little, and certainly no tariffs.

B.: When I mail books to Canada, the postage runs about $1.50 per book. Then Customs puts a 40% duty on the book at the border. Since I give a dealer 40% off, he winds up paying full retail price or more. Some dealers just refuse the books and return them, and I have to pay the return postage, which puts me out about $26.00 on a shipment of ten books. The books get scuffed up in the mail and I can't resell them, so that I lose several ways on some shipments to Canada.

Crown has a distributor in Canada, General Publishing. I was hoping that Crown would distribute the books throughout Canada and collectors would get them at regular book stores. But the retail price has to be something like $11.95 with all that duty.

G.: They finally dropped the price to $10.95. But Ron Van Leeuwen at Silver Snail sells them for their U.S. cover price of $7.95. He only makes an infinitesimal profit, but he sells them quickly enough and in enough volume that he's happy.

B.: I've got a shipment of fifteen hardcover *Guides* right now that is lost, that wasn't delivered when I mailed it out in April. And I've had some stores set up a U.S. address at the border, so that I don't have the problem of filling out Customs forms and border crossings. The dealers take care of that themselves. Really, I never know if my shipments to Canada are ever going to make it through or not. I can't insure them, because I have to send them by more expensive parcel post to get the insurance. I had some heavy losses during some years, shipping books to Canada.

T.: Nobody makes money in Canada!

B.: Crown has the world distribution rights to the *Price Guide*, but they sold their European distribution rights to a distributor in London. The *Guide* is getting into European bookstores now, and I've always been selling to European dealers myself. The *Guide* has even been ordered from Poland, a communist country, and I've sent them to South America, Australia, and South Africa. A person wrote me from Paris that he was at one of their sidewalk cafes when he noticed the person next to him reading a *Price Guide*.

G.: One of the things about the *Guide* is that when a person is interested in a particular company or a particular artist, he's more or less forced, by the structure of the *Guide*, to go through it page by page looking for each title or issue which would fit into his collection. Is there any way you could fit a cross-index into the *Guide* or some other such scheme which would aid the collector in finding the books he's likely to want to collect?

B.: I was in Richmond, Virginia, back in April, taking pictures, and Tom Inge came over. He's an English professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University, and he works a lot with comics. Well, he brought up the same question: "It would really be nice if, in the back of each edition of the *Guide*, you had all the best artists indexed as to what page and title their work appears in." We all thought it was a pretty good idea. I can see, to begin with, it would be an enormous amount of work just to put it together, let alone compile it *after* we had typeset the body of the *Guide* itself. The last thing we do on the *Guide* is number the pages, so we would have practically no time to do the cross-index before we went to negatives. It would take a long time for somebody to go through the book and index all those artists.

But Tom Inge volunteered. He would

continued on page 26

Coming Attractions

Next issue will be the first 128 page color cover issue of **Collector's Dream**. Featured will be:

- Dick O'Malley's study of the Fantastic Four
- Bennet Marks' extra-ordinary Marvel Genealogy
- Interview with Roy Thomas
- Mini-interviews with Steranko and Byron Preiss
- The Gems of Arkham house, with scores of photographs and a definitive price guide to the books published by that remarkable publisher
- Remarks on Philippine comics, by Marshall F. Johnson
- The conclusion of the **Pertwillaby Papers** early episodes
- Three WARDWORLD columns
- Indexing systems for your comic collection
- The conclusion of our editorial Comic Collecting Is a Small-Time Hobby

The 1977 San Diego Con was a gold mine of interviews for us, as were two recent Toronto Cons. Already taped and destined for inclusion in future issues are interviews with Jim Craig, Joe Staton, Walt Simonson and Al Milgrom, Don Glut, Mike Friedrich and Jim Starlin. Wait until the 1978 Con!

have his English class do it. He would let the whole class work on it and then send it back to me, and in fact even got started on it after I had left Richmond. Then I saw him a bit later in Philadelphia. He told me that his class had gotten together and started working on the cross-index, and he said, "God, it's a tremendous job! It would take months to do this, with the whole class working on it. There's just no way it could be done economically."

T.: Couldn't you use your upcoming computer for that?

B.: Even then you're going to have to keypunch the pages, which are not known. When you're ready to go to negatives and the book has got to go to the printer in time for the first of April, there's just no time.

G.: I guess you have to just look at the *Guide* and say that it's easier to go through it than to go through thousands and thousands of comics, some of which you don't even know exist and most of which you don't have anyway.

B.: And it would add another 100 pages to the *Guide*, too.

T.: And there are fanzines produced expressly for that purpose anyway.

B.: There aren't too many artists who bring a significant premium, either. Frazetta is one, so are Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson and Carl Barks. What you really need is a separate art index, and you should buy that for your library. The *Price Guide* can't do everything; some people have the idea that the *Price Guide* should be an encyclopedia, too. There are tremendous amounts of information coming in, and I really don't know where to draw the line, what to put in and what to leave out. Powell is one example...

G.: Who? Pal??

B.: That's right, Powell.

G.: P-A-L? Like George Pal, the animator?

B.: P-O-W-E-L-L. He did a lot of work on the ME westerns.

G.: Oh, *Powell!*

T.: George, he's from Tennessee, remember? (All laugh uproariously.)

B.: ...yes, well, don't you agree he should be left out if possible?

G.: Well, I can't say that he's one of the more prominent artists. But once you have the information in there, why not keep it?

T.: You could always say, see the 1977 edition of the *Price Guide*...

B.: And now Matt Baker is getting really popular; he's becoming a really collectible artist. People are seeking out Baker's stuff. He did the Phantom Lady, for example. I was at the American Comic Book Company, going through stacks of love comics and practically every one had covers or interior art by Matt Baker. Beautiful art! But he's found everywhere, so it would really be a lot of work to track him down. Maybe I could "gang list" him, in a certain title I could just say that he did "most covers and stories" without pointing out specific issues.

G.: The trials and tribulations of publishing!

T.: Could you explain why underground comics aren't listed in the *Guide*?

B.: There are several reasons. Probably the biggest is the space limitation. The *Guide* is already well over 600 pages, and it's got to keep space available for growth. There is a tremendous number of new titles started up each year, and I want to keep publishing it for years to come. For instance, last year I did one little thing that saved 50 pages: I left a single space between each title instead of two. Just by doing that I saved 50 pages! I also cut down on the number of halftones. I deleted about three to four hundred halftones and that saved me another 30 pages. But now I can't think of anything else to save space so that I have room to grow. So it's an easy cutoff point to say that undergrounds are something separate, and to keep them out of the book.

Another reason is that the *Price Guide* goes to church groups and libraries and people from all walks of life: If I put undergrounds in, it would lower the respectability of the *Guide* just a bit. It might open up new markets in the underground area, but I would lose some of the other areas.

Then there are the large number of different printings and editions of undergrounds, which are hard or impossible to tell apart, and which would probably have to sell for different prices. What the undergrounds should have is their own price guide, if the market in back issues can support it.

T.: *Eerie* and other Warren publications are magazines, but they're listed in the *Guide* as comic books...

B.: Well, I call them "comic book magazines". I could have ruled out magazines like that, but I decided to include them because there really aren't that many of them, and they really are comic books in a slightly different format. I also include the reprint books from the 1920's, which aren't really comic books but which are the beginning of this whole thing. They can be thought of as the first comic books. Nobody knew how to price them, so I found out and included them.

G.: I noticed that you don't have the first *Yellow Kid* from 1897...

B.: That's not a comic book! I've had people who have written me about that, copies of the cover sent. Yellow Kid only appeared on the cover, not in the interior, and there are no comic strips inside. If there were, it certainly would have to be listed, and it would be a pretty valuable item because it would really be the first comic book.

I think there are two copies of it in existence—I tried to buy one of them once, but found out what was in it and didn't want it. I think Steranko might own the other one.

G.: Bob Overstreet, many thanks for your time. □

A Consumer's Guide to Comicbook Dealers

Persistent rumors of vast injustices perpetrated on comic collectors by mail-order dealers have been circulating since day one. Last year we launched a secret survey, in which we placed small orders with all the dealers advertising in Marvel Comics, to see if any of these rumors were true. The results of that survey—the first of its kind ever conducted—are reported herein.

Over the past decade, and especially in the years since the publication of Robert Overstreet's **Comic Book Price Guide**, the number of people actively engaged in the search for back-issue comic books has increased dramatically. To fill this need,

by Ron Gomes

Photo by Ken Steacy

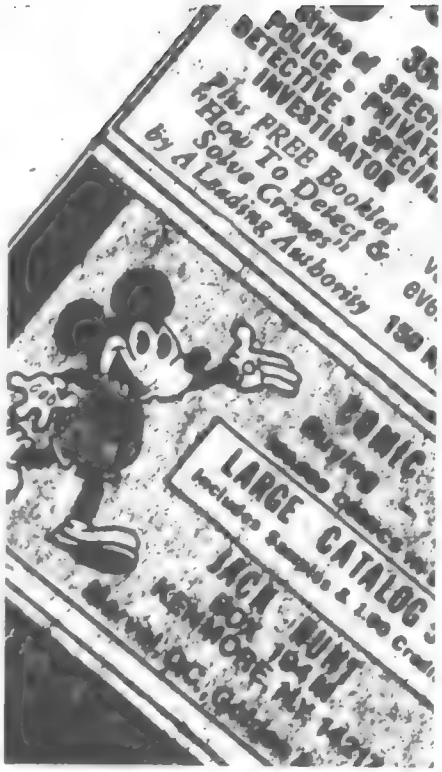
QUESTIONS
DREAM

there has been a corresponding increase in the number of people involved in the buying and selling of comics as a living (or at least as a profitable sideline). Stores dealing exclusively in the sale of old and new comic books now exist in most major cities in North America, and comic conventions held in these same cities are generally well-attended by comic dealers, many of whom travel a considerable distance to get there.

These are the most visible instances of the extensive trade in comics; and it is from the stores and especially the conventions that whatever image the common man has of comic fandom is mainly derived (assisted by the "Boy, if you had only saved those funny books you had as a kid" style of convention coverage by the media). But these are by no means the only places where comics are bought and sold: a great deal of business is conducted through the *mails*. Many comic dealers work exclusively or near-exclusively by mail. They rely on ads placed in large-circulation fanzines like *The Buyer's Guide* and (those who can afford it) in the comic books themselves to attract steady customers whose numbers they hope will also be increased by word-of-mouth. The amount of money changing hands in this way is very difficult to estimate, but it is not unlikely that it makes up the greater part of back-issue comic sales.

From the dealer's viewpoint a mail-order business is attractive because it provides him with a potentially vast clientele compared with that of a walk-in store or infrequent convention, while essentially allowing him to work at home, thus avoiding the considerable work and expense involved in founding and maintaining a conventional establishment of business. The dealer has a firmer control over his stock; no one inspects it but himself, and he is the sole arbiter of such disputable characteristics as the grade of a book. He is less susceptible to theft—some dealers disdain conventions, in fact, because of the losses they have incurred through organized shoplifting at these events. On the other hand, the dealer must spend much time on the tedious (and sometimes expensive) task of packaging and addressing the merchandise he sells, he must (by law) accept responsibility for any packages he sends through the mail, and additionally his livelihood is particularly vulnerable to the onslaught of a postal shutdown or strike (an almost predictably annual occurrence in Canada—but that's another story). But clearly there are many who find that the gains outweigh the disadvantages of a mail-order dealership.

The collector who orders comics through the mail has a great many dealers from which to choose; his marketplace is a very broad one and he has ample opportunity to comparison-shop so that he can obtain what he feels is the best deal from among those offering his wants. On the other hand he is in a very real sense at a disadvantage in the transaction. He has no opportunity to examine first-hand the merchandise he wishes to buy before he has actually paid for it. (This is perhaps the single most dissatisfying aspect of a mail as opposed to an over-the-counter purchase.) He must assume compatibility between his and the dealer's view on the oft-disputable subject of grading (not to mention *honesty* on the part of the dealer). He must wait a considerable time between payment and receipt of merchandise (because that's the way the mail moves, fella). Ultimately he must assume that the dealer will not simply take his money and disappear. This last possibility is not an insignificant one—the existence of the WSA mail-fraud-fighting organization and the reports it has delivered over the years are evidence of that.



"Mean cost of an order for three average Marvels was $7.65."

Without understating the problem of outright theft through the mails, it should be noted that it is usually possible to avoid such a misfortune by dealing with an "established" dealer, or at least making some small attempt to check his reputation before ordering from him. The WSA functions somewhat like a Better Business Bureau in this respect; the display of the WSA seal is usually an indication that a dealer is established and reliable, or at least recommended by others who are (although such reliability is certainly not restricted to WSA members). Repeated ads by a dealer are also an indication that he is not a one-shot thief: such people don't tend to stay in one place long enough for irate customers to find them.

But there are other, more subtle criteria for evaluating mail-order service than the mere fact that the recipient of the money does not run away, and there is more to customer satisfaction than the mere receipt of something in the mail. Aside from the prices he charges for his comics (the most blunt criterion), a mail-order dealer is also characterized by such things as courtesy, intelligibility, promptness of response, fairness in grading policy, the extent of his inventory (both in terms of numbers and conditions of books offered), and care in the packaging and mailing of the material ordered. (In connection with inventory it should perhaps be mentioned that this cannot always be determined from a dealer's price list alone. The fact that the prices appearing in the *Price Guide* are reputed to be averaged from the *advertised* selling prices of comic books rather than the actual prices at which they are being sold is motivation for a dealer to advertise a book he does not have in stock, at a price no one would pay anyway, in order to raise the "official" price which will subsequently be published in the *Guide*.) Such aspects of a dealer's service are not always determinable from his published price catalogue. Failure to meet them does not necessarily imply fraud or maliciousness on the part of the dealer (although this cannot be ruled out); but it may very well imply carelessness, apathy, or slipshod, minimal-effort working habits on his part. While it may not actually be illegal to fail to conform to these criteria, it is undeniable that a dealer who does meet them, and who in addition has priced his books fairly, is a "good" dealer by any reasonable definition, and is certainly "better" than one who has missed them by a long shot.

It might be argued that such slipshod dealers would be forced out of the marketplace by competition with the "good" ones, but this is not necessarily so. For one thing, since every indication is that new comic collectors are constantly being created out of nothing, any dealer can expect a steady, possibly increasing stream of first-order new customers. But more importantly, many comic collectors are very young people with limited resources and a limited knowledge of comic fandom. They lack the ability to shop around and perhaps are not aware of the desirability, either; the fact that a dealer sends comic books when he is sent money may seem all that is necessary. They may very likely remain with the same inferior dealer through many orders without ever being aware of what they're missing. And finally, there exists an indeterminate number of comic collectors who are not discriminating in their purchases and will not complain (or even notice, possibly) if a book is not delivered in the condition promised. It may be to a dealer's advantage to constantly over-grade the comics he sells if only an acceptably small percentage of his customers is ever observed to complain or to refuse the material. This does not make it *right*, but it is certainly expedient.

The problem is largely one of ignorance. Every comic fan has his repertoire of Dealer Horror Stories—the "fine" comic covered with Scotch tape, the very expensive book sent entirely unprotected in a manila envelope through the mail, the cheap reprint sold as a high-priced

original. It is difficult to determine the degree of truth in any one of these stories or the extent of complicity of the dealer in each case. And it is ethically dubious, and probably libelous, to condemn a dealer (especially in print) on the basis of undocumented, hearsay evidence (into which class fall many of the allegations exchanged by fans, as believable and as fun to relate as they may be).

A valuable tool for the collector in choosing a mail-order dealer would be a systematic, well-documented survey of all existing dealers, based on actual experience in ordering from them, outlining objectively the virtues and the faults of the service provided by each, and drawing pointed comparisons between dealers where this is called for—in effect, a *Consumer Reports* style of investigation. Such a complete survey would be an elaborate and expensive project indeed; but a recent survey subsidized by G & T Enterprises, while somewhat more limited in its goals, has taken a step in that direction.

THE SURVEY: METHODS

The ideal goal of examining *all* mail-order comic book dealers would require resources possessed by few. The intent of the present project was to conduct a small-scale investigation into such dealing by placing (necessarily small) orders with all the dealers in some well-defined subset of the whole lot of them. Although such a restrained investigation cannot hope to answer all the relevant questions, it can provide useful information just the same. To our knowledge *no* such survey, on *any* scale, has ever been conducted before—and even a comparison of pricing policies alone (requiring comparatively little research and expense) could provide a good metric for distinguishing among dealers.

The single important constraint on the project was that it require no more than about $200.00 to be spent in gathering the information. Immediately this ruled out any dealing for the more expensive back-issue comics. (This is unfortunate, since any dishonesty in dealing—something the survey seeks to uncover where it can—is much more likely to be exhibited in cases where the potential gain is considerable, i.e. with high-priced comic books.) It also ruled out dealing for the more "moderately-expensive" books (say, those selling for dozens of dollars, rather than hundreds or thousands), unless we were to restrict the scope of the survey to a handful of dealers and comic books ordered, which would be of little use to a consumer as a guide.

The set of dealers chosen for investigation consisted of all those who advertised back-issue comics for sale in June 1977 cover-dated issues of Marvel Comics. There were 22 such ads, suggesting as a rough estimate that we could reasonably spend on the order of $10.00 with each of them. To simplify comparison it was also decided that the same comic books would be ordered from each dealer, wherever possible.

The standard procedure followed was first to order a price catalogue from every

"Prices continue to soar startlingly on early Marvels, and it is unlikely that collectors of average income will own them if they do not already."

dealer who advertised, and then to place an order for three comic books with each dealer who responded. Where the dealer offered a choice of condition in ordering comics, different conditions were specified in the order. In all cases alternate choices were specified. The three books chosen (somewhat arbitrarily) were all 1960s Marvel comics: *Tales of Suspense* No. 81 (September 1966), *The Incredible Hulk* No. 104 (June 1968), and *Amazing Spider-Man* No. 77 (October 1969). (The alternates specified were the three succeeding issues of each title, i.e. *Suspense* No.'s 82, 83, 84, *Hulk* No.'s 105, 106, 107, and *Spider-Man* No.'s 78, 79, and 80). Without making any attempt to be rigorous, it was felt that these were generally inexpensive enough to be purchased within the budget of the project, yet provided at least a bit of a spread of years and, possibly, availability (e.g., the reputedly much-in-demand *Spider-Man* might be expected to be less often in stock, while the older yet reputedly less-sought *Tales of Suspense* might be easier to acquire—although its age might make it difficult to obtain in superior condition). It was not possible to follow the standard procedure with every order. In order to make up a minimum order required by some dealers it was necessary to order more comics than the three specified. Others did not list all of the above-mentioned comics in their catalogues. Others required follow-up requests in order to obtain a catalogue. In a few cases the transaction could not be completed in time for the deadline of this report. Such anomalies

SHOP-BY-MAIL

BUY—SELL—TRADE

For Sale: List of coins, comics, baseball and hockey cards. Specify on category. Send 50 cents each list to Adam Menkes, 5 Kentor Lane, Monsey, NY 10952.

For Sale: AFTA #1: A small, friendly fanzine with fannish news, reviews and interviews on comics, TV, film. 48 pages—75 cents. Bill Marcinko, RPO 5009-D, Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ 08903.

For Sale: QUESTAR, the NEW magazine of science fiction and fantasy. $2.50 per copy from: QUESTAR, 1535 Oneida Dr., Jefferson Borough, Clairton, PA 15025. #1 available soon.

For Sale: STAR WARS #1—first printing—$2.00. Please send SASE for my list of other items for sale. Arthur Aw, 1404 Humuula St., Kailua, HI 96734.

For Sale: Your 45 RPM records may be worth big money. Record Collector's Price Guide tells you. $7.70 postpaid. Jellyroll, Dept. DR, Box 3017, Scottsdale, AZ 85257.

For Sale: Records—Oldies, 60's-70's, 45's. 3 for $1.00. Order now, supply limited. Add 25 cents for postage. Fred Chirico, 2554 S. 5th St., Philadelphia, PA 19148.

Buy, Sell, Trade: (especially '50's comics). Jeff Patton, 3621 Carolina St., NW, Massilon, OH 44646 WSA #351 (216) 478-0313.

For Sale/Trade: WONDER WOMAN, SENSATION, ALL STAR, JUMBO, FAWCETTS, TIMELYS. All 1942-47, all 80% Overstreet. Joseph Veilleux, 40 Mechanic St., Rockland, ME 04841.

Buying: HOWARD THE DUCK #1-5 (set only) paying $18.00. SWAMP THING #1-7 (set only) paying $35.00. Robert Edwall, Alkilsplan 6, 711 00 Lindesberg, SWEDEN

WANTED

Wanted: I will pay 1977 *Price Guide* prices for FANTASTIC FOUR #2 and HULK #1-6 in MINT ONLY. Send to: Grant McDonagh, 1770 West 12, Apt. 113, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 2E6.

Wanted: SHADOW and AVENGER pulps, and SHADOW comics—if you are selling, drop me a line. Carole Dingwall, P.O. Box 190, Hamilton, ONT. L8N 3A2.

Wanted: HARLEQUIN 102, 117 and ANY NEWS STAND LIBRARY, Toronto 1949, 1950. Box 4126C, Calgary, Alta.

Wanted: In VF to NM only: MARVEL MYSTERY #26-31, 36, 37, 44, 46, 71, 86, 91. HUMAN TORCH #14, 18, 31-34, 36. SUB-MARINER #26, 29-31. Also wanted: OLD GIRLIE MAGAZINES from 1940's and 1950's, especially: BEAUTY PARADE, EYEFUL, FLIRT, SHOWGIRLS, TITTER, WINK, WHISPER, etc., in nice shape. Thank you for the terrific response to my previous ads. Keep 'em coming. Tony Frutti, 1285 St. Clair Ave. W., Toronto, ONT., Canada, M6E 1B8.

Wanted: BASEBALL CARDS before 1958. Tony Galovich, Box 11115, Santa Ana, CA 92711 (714) 835-4159

Wanted: Early issues of the X-MEN, STRANGE TALES, SPIDER-MAN and FANTASTIC FOUR in fine or better. Kevin Affolder, 422 McKenney Rd., Vincennes, IN 47591.

Wanted: X-MEN #1-60 NM-M, DAREDEVIL #1-110 NM-M, SILVER SURFER #16 NM-M. Reasonable prices paid. Richard DeDominicis, Jr., 2705 Circle Drive, Monaca, PA 15061.

Wanted: FANTASTIC FOUR, IRON MAN, AVENGERS, DAREDEVIL in FINE-NM. Send list with prices to: Mike Irizarry, RD 2, Box 2549E, Browns Mills, NJ 08015.

Wanted: I am interested in POLICE COMICS #14-102. Send prices and condition. Jean-Claude Bedy, 103 Euclid, Yale, MI 48089.

Wanted: CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED JUNIORS, THE COMIC READER, FOOM, HERBIE, ACG Comics. Will answer all letters promptly. Jerry Edwards, 1913 W. Willard, Long Beach, CA 90810.

are noted below in each case to which they apply.

A summary in chart form of the investigation is provided along with this report, briefly noting the performance of each dealer in the several aspects of service we examined. We have also noted each dealer's advertised selling prices for a couple of books generally regarded as expensive (though in different contexts): *Fantastic Four* No. 1 and *Howard the Duck* No. 1, and we have noted the price of the least expensive standard Marvel comics as well. We are certainly aware that there is more to good service than pricing alone—indeed that is entirely the reason for making this investigation in the first place. Nevertheless pricing is a major contributor to the overall impression one forms of a dealer and we feel that a dealer's policy in pricing these two relatively infamous comic books is (within limits) one reasonable criterion for judging "fairness" on the whole. (Needless to say, we did not attempt to order either of these comics from any of the dealers.)

The summary chart is intended only for use as a quick reference; it is expected that the more complete descriptions given below will be consulted as well.

Any commodity in which large-scale trading and speculation takes place cannot be expected to remain at a constant price for very long. In most cases the specific prices mentioned below for the comics ordered are already out of date. (Indeed, since we originally obtained the price lists just prior to publication of the 1977 *Price Guide*, massive revisions naturally took place shortly thereafter.) Most of the orders were placed prior to May 1, 1977—on that date many of the lists we had received became obsolete. Given the powerful inflation at work this is not surprising; thus the survey is in fact a snapshot of dealer service in the Spring of 1977.

All of the orders were placed from an address in Toronto—this should be taken into consideration when comparing the lengths of time taken for merchandise to arrive. (The Post Office itself, and the border crossing required in most cases, comprise an unknown factor which is beyond our mere mortal faculties to fairly evaluate.) Grading of books was done according to the system described in *Collector's Dream* No. 1—grades determined with this method are not significantly different from those obtained using the descriptions in Overstreet's *Price Guide*. When comparing postage applied to packages against the "postage and handling" charges made by the dealer it should be noted that a certain amount of the charge may be applied toward the cost of packaging (labor and materials).

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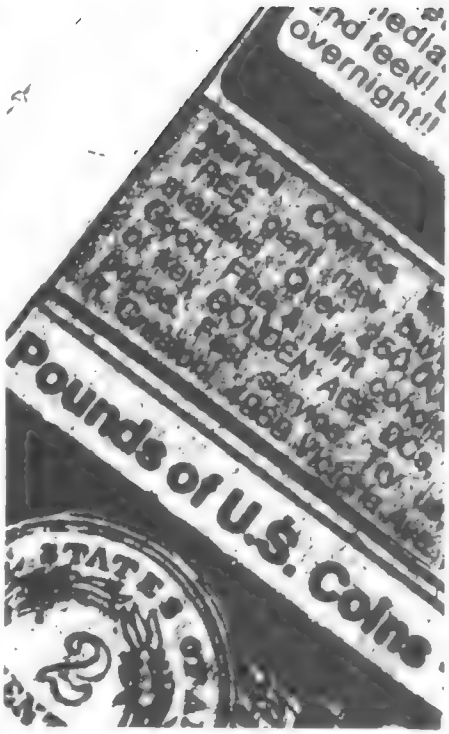
Richard Alf
P.O. Box 20622
San Diego, California 92120

"FREE COMIC CATALOG. Send NOW for our latest list of Marvel and DC Comics for sale." We sent for it, and it was received 22 days later by first class mail (postmarked 5 days before arriving).



"Comics in condition significantly better than G or VG were the rule rather than the exception."

The list is a 4-page leaflet; included with it were an order form and an Alf-addressed envelope for placing an order. All comic books are promised "in very good or better condition"; no choice is offered. Minimum order is $6.00; there is a flat 75-cent surcharge for postage and handling. Alf offers "special discounts" for new customers, ranging from 5% for orders over $10.00, to 25% for orders over $200.00. His price list also includes several inexpensive "Comic Bird Specials" (the "Comic Bird" is a little critter who says "Cheap, Cheap, Cheap"), most (but not all) of which are 1960s Marvel reprint comics. His price list and his order form are both copyrighted—which is interesting when we note that the design of the order form for Black Gold Comics (see below) is identical to Alf's, and *not* copyrighted. The list of comics for sale is very incomplete in comparison with most others we received; many comics are not offered for sale at all, and some of these are relatively recent as well. In particular, recent first issues of many titles (e.g. *Man-Thing, Iron Fist, Invaders, Son of Satan, Omega*) are not offered. The list we received expired on May 1, 1977.

It was necessary to drastically alter the standard order in this case because of the incompleteness of the advertised inventory. Only *one* of the three comics we usually ordered, *Spider-Man* 77, was listed. *Tales of Suspense* was not listed at all, and the earliest issue of *Hulk* listed was 105. We substituted an issue of *Strange Tales* for the unavailable *Suspense* (somewhat arbitrarily). The order we placed thus included *Strange Tales* 161 ($1.50), *Spider-Man* 77 ($1.50), and *Hulk* 105 ($1.75); in order to make up the minimum order of $6.00 we added another book, *Spider-Man* 78 ($1.50). (We had to specify a different set of alternates as well.) Total cost of the order was $7.00 ($6.25 plus $0.75 postage and handling).

The package arrived 33 days after the order was placed; it had been postmarked 11 days before arriving. The comics were sent in an almost perfectly comic-sized, reasonably sturdy cardboard mailing carton, taped securely shut. The package was sent "Fourth Class Special Rate—Books" and 30 cents postage was used (75 cents charged). Included were a new envelope, order form, and price list (to expire July 1, 1977), and an apologetic note ("Sorry to keep you waiting. . . we've been moving") offering a 10% discount on our next order in return for our "patience". (The note said the move had taken place in March and April, although our order would have been received in May.)

We received *Spider-Man* 77 and 78 and *Hulk* 105 as ordered, all in fine condition, and a near-mint copy of *Hulk* 106 (an alternate). The two issues of *Hulk* were plastic-bagged; the issues of *Spider-Man* were not. No statement of books sent was included, and no separate acknowledgement was made.

Overall: Incomplete inventory, and a bit slow in responding to orders (although there were extenuating circumstances). Prices reasonable and packaging superior. 2nd highest minimum order requirement. 11th most expensive order.

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The American Comic Book Company
(David T. Alexander and Terry Stroud)
12206 Ventura Blvd.
Studio City, California 91604

"FREE. COMIC LIST—SEND STAMP. GIANT COMIC LIST—SEND 50 CENTS. PULP MAG LIST—SEND $1.00." We sent 50 cents in coin for the "giant comic list" and received an envelope 14 days later (postmarked 5 days before arrival) sent first class and stuffed very full with not one, but two price lists.

The American Comic Book Company appears to be a large operation. The "giant" list is a thick 44-page digest called *The Special Blend* No. 3 and is only one of a number of lists published by them—others include a "giant" pulp list, a "big, huge" magazine list, and a number of "special" comics lists (Westerns, E.C., Timely and Atlas, etc.). *Special Blend* contains listings for "All *Marvel* comics 1961-present; all *D.C.* comics 1952-present; other companies 1960-present (except Disney & Archie character comics. . .)". In addition this list contains some Golden Age comics, several pages of pulp magazines, and some movie posters. Along with this we received something called a "Free List" which would appear to be the first list mentioned in their ad. It is a 16-page digest which is not a supplement to but rather a revision of many of the prices in *Special Blend*. Both lists are attractive packages sprinkled throughout with cartoons, artwork, and photographs.

It takes a bit of time examining both the lists in order to understand the exact procedure required for placing an order. The two lists contain mutually contradictory information regarding grading, pricing and postage and handling charges on orders. *Special Blend* mentions a "15-part grading system", containing grades ranging from "MINT" to "POOR" (and including "GOOD-VERY GOOD", "GOOD+", "GOOD", and "ABOUT GOOD"). The giant list also contains the rather nebulous claim that "unless specifically listed, all books are in *good* or *better*, or *fine* or *better* condition." (Since the difference between "good" and "fine" condition is quite considerable, we think this is misleading.) It goes on to state that "most of our post-1970 comics are *fine* or *better*" and that "depending upon the age of the books the average condition of an order of *good* or *better* condition comic books will be about *very good*."

Eventually it becomes clear that the intent is for the information in *Special Blend* to be used only for comics not listed in the "Free List." This latter list contains only Marvel and DC comics, and presumably only the "most collectible" of these comics. Prices are generally higher than those in *Special Blend*, usually dramatically so. Postage and handling charges have been increased (and in particular raised from $2.00 to $4.00 for overseas orders) and "no minimum order" has become "a $5.00 minimum order". The "Free List" also uses a much simplified 3-part grading system: books can be ordered in "G-VG", "FINE", or "NM-M". Postage and handling charge in the U.S. and Canada is $1.50. "All orders are insured free of charge. Your order will be mailed parcel post."

All of the books in our order were listed in the "Free List". We ordered *Hulk* 104 ($4.00) and *Suspense* 81 ($1.25) in NM condition, and *Spider-Man* 77 in FINE ($1.25). Total cost was $8.00 ($6.50 plus $1.50 "postage and insurance").

The package arrived 21 days after the order was placed, and it had been postmarked 11 days before arriving. The comics were mailed loose between two thick pieces of cardboard in a manila envelope, sealed and taped shut; a new order form was included as well. The package was sent parcel post and insured (the Customs declaration read "Rare Books—Value $15.00") with $2.15 postage used ($1.50 charged). Three comics were received. *Hulk* 104 was in very fine to near-mint condition, *Suspense* 81 was in *fine* condition (although ordered in NM-M), and *Spider-Man* 78 (an alternate), although ordered in FINE, was in no better than *good* condition: the cover was quite worn and creased, and both the cover and the interiors contained a number of small tears. The *Spider-Man* was plastic-bagged; the other two were not. No statement of books sent was included, and no separate acknowledgement was made.

Overall: Unsatisfactory; comics not provided in the condition paid for. 7th most expensive order.

"New collectors may remain with an inferior dealer through many orders without ever being aware of what they are missing."

Robert Bell
Box 18
Hauppage, New York 11787

"OVER 100,000 COMICS IN STOCK! Send $1.00 for complete list and 48-page Marvel Pocket Checklist with sample comic bag—50 cents for price list only." We sent 50 cents for the price list only. It arrived very promptly 9 days after it was ordered (5 days after it was postmarked), by first class mail.

The price list (expiring August 1, 1977) is a 16-page 9" x 7" typeset booklet devoted mostly to Marvel Comics; there are also some listings for Golden Age comics, Walt Disney, Timely, DC, Atlas, and magazines. Order forms are contained in the catalogue. The Marvel listings are mostly complete. Prices are a bit high in comparison with other dealers, but prices on early Marvels are often significantly lower than usual. Comics are in "good or better condition" and no choice is offered. There is no minimum order, but orders under $10.00 must add 50 cents for postage and handling. Orders outside the U.S. must add $1.00 for postage and handling regardless. Bell also provides credit for completed trading stamp booklets.

We placed the standard order: *Hulk* 104 ($2.00), *Spider-Man* 77 ($3.00), and *Suspense* 81 ($2.00). Total cost was $8.00 ($7.00 plus $1.00 postage and handling). A parcel arrived in 11 days (7 days after it was postmarked), the fastest response of any of the orders. The comics were sent between two pieces of shirt cardboard in a jiffy bag which was stapled shut. 30 cents postage was used ($1.00 charged). An acknowledgement of the order arrived a day later by first class mail (the delay being entirely the fault of the Post Office)—it did not, however, specify which books had been sent. We received *Suspense* 81 in fine, *Spider-Man* 77 in very fine, and *Hulk* 106 (an alternate) in very fine. The issue of *Hulk* was plastic-bagged—the other two were not.

Overall: Prompt response, separate acknowledgement, and surprisingly low prices on some old comics. Some high prices. 7th most expensive order.

David Belmont
55 Greenaway Rd.
Rochester, New York 14610

"FREE! MARVEL COMICS SELLING LIST! DC Comics and Magazine Selling List! Golden and Silver Age Comic Catalog! Huge Buying List—I pay top Prices! Fantastic FREE Comic Gift coupon! Send 13-cent stamp or 15 cents for all 5 Free Gifts!" We sent 15 cents and received a catalogue in 10 days (3 days after it was postmarked), by first class mail.

The price list is a saddle-stapled digest-sized booklet. The cover is cardboard and is a detachable order form. This "GIANT CATALOG No. 6" expires December 31, 1977, although the "MARVEL PRICE LIST NO. 9" (a sub-list within it) expired on May 31, 1977. It contains some Golden Age listings, "Comics I Will Buy", Dell, DC, magazines, and scattered Archie and Harvey listings: 24 digest pages in all. The catalogue is not at all attractive to the eye—most listings appear in teeny-tiny type, reproduction is faded in some places and smudged in others, and space used is kept to a minimum by placing as many issue numbers, prices, and conditions as possible on each line. Fortunately four columns are used on most pages, but the list is still tedious to use as a reference. The Marvel Pricelist stands out by being more neatly laid out in column form, making it easier to determine prices for a given title and issue. The Marvel list is fairly complete. The catalogue seems definitely aimed at a very young audience. In exclamatory, contraction-less, often illiterate prose, Belmont exhorts customers to specify alternates because "I sometimes do run out of certian (sic) issues" and "to avoid disapointments (sic)". We are told "If your (sic) are serious about buying comics than (sic) I am your man." He claims that his "newest GIANT CATALOG is one of the largest, if not THE LARGEST Catalog in the world." It isn't by a long shot. He also claims to "offer the Best Quality Comics in The World and at the *lowest prices!* If you do not believe this—than (sic) go ahead and spend your $10.00 and find out for yourself!!!!!!" (We did, and we still don't believe it. His prices are good (except on some early issues), but they are not invariably the lowest on an across-the-board basis.)

Minimum order is $4.00. There is a charge of 75 cents for "postage, insurance and special packaging" ($1.00 to

Canada, $2.00 to other countries). Marvels are offered for sale in 3 conditions: "GOOD", "VG / FN", and "NM / M". The first order form also includes two "coupons" to be checked in order to receive a free comic and bag ("SEND ME MY FREE COMIC (DEALERS (sic) CHOICE!) I CAN NOT WAIT TO SEE WHAT MY FREE COMIC IS GOING TO BE!!! DO NOT FORGET TO SEND MY FREE 3 MIL PLASTIC COMIC PROTECTIVE BAG!!!!"), and a free "spring comic book supplement' ("I CAN NOT BELEIVE (sic) YOU HAVE MORE COMICS THAN WHAT IS (sic) ON THIS GIANT CATALOG! I AM REALLY INTERESTED IN YOUR SPRING SUPPLEMENT BECAUSE I COLLECT THE COMICS THAT ARE GOING TO BE FEATURED ON IT! ... PLEASE SEND ME THE SUPPLEMENT WITH MY ORDER, I KNOW THAT THERE WILL BE BOOKS THAT I NEED FOR MY COLLECTION!").

We checked both boxes, and we placed the standard order: *Hulk* 104 ($3.50) and *Suspense* 81 ($1.70) in NM / M, and *Spider-Man* 77 in G ($1.50). Total cost was $7.70 ($6.70 plus $1.00 postage). A fat manila envelope, sealed and Scotch-taped shut, arrived in 12 days (7 days after it was postmarked). 88 cents postage was used ($1.00 charged). The package was uninsured. The merchandise within had additionally been placed in a thin plastic bag, between two pieces of thick cardboard. The "free comic" was a copy of the Atlas / Seaboard *Scorpion* No. 1. *Spider-Man* 77 was sent in very good to fine, *Suspense* 81 in very fine (although ordered in NM / M). The others were alternates: *Suspense* 82 and 83 in near-mint condition. The *Spider-Man* and *Suspense* 82 were unbagged—the other three were in protective plastic bags. A new order form was enclosed, as well as a statement of the books sent—no other mail acknowledgement was made. A 10-cent credit (the difference between the money paid and the comics actually sent) was given toward our next order. The "spring supplement" was not included—a note explained that work was still in progress and that we would be mailed a copy. It had still not arrived by mid-August, but soon after the beginning of June we did receive a new "MARVEL SUMMER PRICELIST No. 10".

Overall: Prompt response, superior packaging. Comics in slightly less than condition paid for. Credit slip (albeit for a tiny amount). Some good prices and a few extremely high prices. 10th most expensive order.

Black Gold Comics
(James and John Harper)
P.O. Box 15032
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74112

"OLD COMIC BOOKS. Back issues of Marvel, D.C., Disney, and Golden Age comics for sale. Over 100,000 comics in stock. For complete list send 25 cents." We did, and the list and order form arrived in 15 days (5 days after it was postmarked).

The list is an 8-page 8½" x 11" saddle-stapled booklet, containing prices for Marvel Comics (the largest and most legible listings in the catalog), Golden Age, Walt Disney Comics, DC, and Big Little Books. The Marvel list is fairly complete but includes no magazines. The list we received expired on May 1, 1977. The order form is identical in design to that of Richard Alf's copyrighted form, although no copyright appears on Black Gold's form.

"100 percent satisfaction" is guaranteed on all purchases. There is no minimum order, but U.S. and Canadian orders under $10.00 are charged $1.00 for postage and handling. (Foreign orders are asked to send $10.00 for postage with the assurance that all unused money will be returned.) Regarding condition they state that "All comics on our list are in *very good* to *mint* condition unless otherwise noted. 80 percent of our comic inventory from 1965 through 1969 are in fine to mint condition. 99 percent of all comics from 1970 to date are in fine to mint condition. We always send the best available copy." They "hope to be of service to you whether threw (sic) the mail or in person."

We placed the standard order: *Hulk* 104 ($2.25), *Spider-Man* 77 ($2.00), and *Suspense* 81 ($1.50). Total cost: $6.75 ($5.75 plus $1.00 postage). In 12 days we received an acknowledgement (postmarked 5 days earlier) that our order had been shipped, along with a new order form, although the books sent were not specified. 19 days after we originally placed the order we received a parcel (postmarked 12 days before it arrived). The comics were sent in a manila envelope, sealed and taped shut; within they were secure between two pieces of thick cardboard taped together. All were unbagged. Package was sent parcel post with $1.75 in postage used ($1.00 charged). The complete order was sent, with no alternates, and all comics were in excellent condition: the *Hulk* in near-mint, and the *Spider-Man* and *Suspense* in very fine. We subsequently received the new price list (as promised in the catalogue we received).

Overall: Very good service. Separate acknowledgement of order, secure packaging, condition better than promised, no alternates, moderate pricing. 14th most expensive order.

Clint's Comics
(Jim Cavanaugh)
3943 Main
Kansas City, Missouri 64111

"We BUY and SELL COMICS. Over 500,000 copies in stock. 1936 to present issues. We are well-known as specialists in Marvel and DC comics. Send 50 cents for our Big illustrated buying and selling comic catalog."

We were not able to obtain a copy in time to place an order for the survey. We sent 50 cents, and when no reply was received after 46 days we sent a second inquiry; when this was still unanswered 68 days later we inquired again and received a reply 9 days later by first class mail (i.e. 121 days after we originally ordered the catalogue). This contained a letter from Sharon Cavanaugh of Clint's Bookstore: "Please accept my apologies for your inconvenience. Requests for our comic catalogue are back-ordered for some time. Please be assured that you will receive a catalogue that you paid for, hopefully by the end of July. Regarding the previous letters that you say you have written, on searching through our correspondence, I can find no earlier receipt. Until the shipping of our catalogue enclosed is a copy of part of it that you can use. It lists the main comics, and is still valid."

What we received was the first portion of "CLINT'S BOOKS CATALOGUE No. 1 FALL 1976" which lists Marvel, DC, and Atlas / Seaboard comics; according to the table of contents the full catalogue also lists Charlton, King, Archie, Gold Key, Tower, magazines, undergrounds, Golden Age, Howard material, books, posters, and portfolios. We received 18 pages, 8½" x 11", xeroxed, and stapled along the top—which makes it tedious to read through consecutively since it's necessary to invert the catalogue each time a new page is turned to. The Marvel list is fairly complete. There is no minimum order, but orders under $25.00 must add a shipping and handling charge of $1.00 in the U.S., or $2.00 in Canada. Orders to other countries must add $2.50 regardless. *"ALL COMICS ARE IN VERY GOOD TO NEAR MINT CONDITION.* OVER 80% OF OUR STOCK IS NEAR MINT."

If there had been time to place an order it would have consisted of *Hulk* 104 ($2.50), *Spider-Man* 77 ($1.75), and *Suspense* 81 ($2.00). Total cost would be $8.25 ($6.25 plus $2.00 postage).

The full catalogue had not arrived by mid-August.

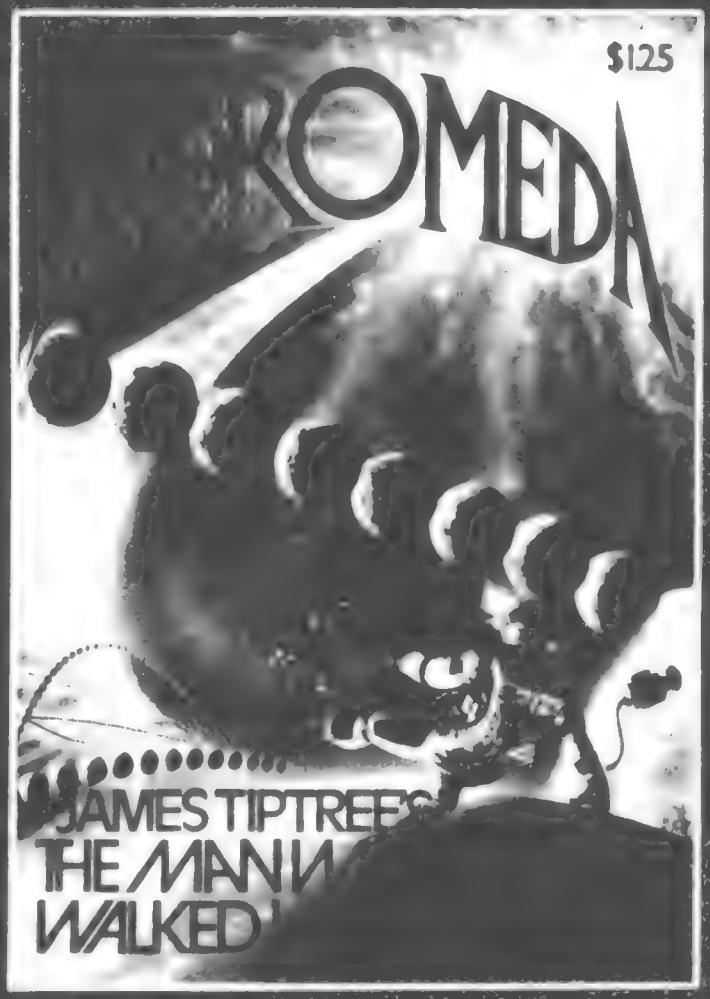
Overall: No order placed because of delay in obtaining list. Postage charge a bit high. 6th most expensive "order".

Comic Sales Company
P.O. Box 352
Brooklyn, New York 11211

"COMIC LIST — No. 9. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope." Not having any U.S. stamps we sent 15 cents in coin and a self-addressed envelope. The list arrived 17 days later by first class mail (postmarked 2 days before it arrived), in a small envelope (not the one we had provided, though).

The list is a 4-page 8½" x 5" leaflet and lists Marvel Comics and magazines, Atlas / Seaboard, DC Comics, monster magazines, and *Playboy*. Prices are generally low. The list of Marvels is fairly complete although there are a number of gaps (*Nova* No. 1, *Marvel Tales* No.'s 1 and 2, *Savage Tales* No.'s 4 through 8, *Fantastic Four Annual* No. 1, to name a few). Most of the other lists contain only random selections. All items are promised "in good to mint condition". (Need we point out the vast difference between the two?) There is no minimum order, although it appears that postage and handling charges could be excessive on large orders. There is a $1.00 "handling charge" on orders under $25.00. "Postage" charges vary according to the merchandise ordered: 10 cents for each "regular comic book", 40 cents for each

BEGINNING SOMETHING NEW!



single copies: $1.25 plus .25 mailing

Silver Snail
321 Queen St.W.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

wholesalers inquire

dealers:
25 copies or more
40% off from

Firefly Books
2 Essex Ave.
Unit 5
Thornhill, Ontario
Canada

Playboy, 25 cents for each "treasury, special or giant comic, or monster mag".

The usual order was made: *Hulk* 104 ($2.50), *Spider-Man* 77 ($1.50), and *Suspense* 81 ($1.00). Total cost was $6.30 ($5.00 plus $1.00 "handling" plus $0.30 "postage"). The package arrived in 38 days (the postmark was illegible) and was sent with 50 cents postage as "printed matter". Packaging was inferior: the books were placed loose in a plastic newsstand magazine bag (not a comic bag) which was taped shut—this bag was placed in a plain manila envelope around which was tied grey string. No cardboard was used. The envelope was not sealed when it arrived. (Fortunately the Post Office did not appear to have taken advantage of this opportunity to trash the contents.) The comics received were exactly those ordered, with no alternates, all in *fine* condition. A new order form and another copy of the price list were enclosed. No statement of books sent was included, nor was any other acknowledgement made.

There is some evidence that Comic Sales Company is affiliated with Grand Book, Inc.: there is a similarity in style of their price lists, both have an address in Brooklyn, there are some similarities in the packaging of the orders, both used a single 50-cent "Lucy Stone" stamp for postage, and both made use of the same peculiar type of grey string in their packages. On the other hand, there are considerable differences between the two price lists. The other schizophrenic personality among the dealers we investigated (Max Seeley / Superhero Comics) provided two essentially identical lists.

Overall: Slow response, inferior packaging. Some low prices. No alternates sent. 16th most expensive order.

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Comic World
(Doug Sulipa)
116-388 Donald Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2J4

"COMICS, COMICS, COMICS—Over 150,000 in stock—Marvels, DC's, Dell, Classics, Bib's, etc. Send for the huge FREE catalogue, with the low, low prices." We did. It arrived in 8 days (postmark illegible), sent as printed matter.

The catalogue is an 8-page 17" x 11" saddle-stapled tabloid. It is exceedingly dense with information—type is reduced and the most is made out of each line. (For instance, in addition to number and price, relevant information regarding artist or contents is often given.) The eyes are strained a bit in perusing it, but fortunately the clear reproduction keeps it from being intolerable. The list includes Marvel Comics and magazines, DCs, Disney Comics, Classics, miscellaneous Marvel items, Atlas / Seaboard, Charlton, Gold Key, Dell, Archie, Harvey, ACG, King, Tower, posters, Robert E. Howard, Star Trek stuff, bubble gum cards, MAD, Big Little Books, some Golden Age, and more—a lot of material here (we told you it was big). The list we received is good "until I put out the next one".

There is "*no* minimum order so as not to shut out anyone", and refunds (rather than credit notes) are issued for all orders which can't be filled. Payment can be in either U.S. or Canadian funds. "Everything listed (is) in fine or better condition (unless otherwise stated), with most recent issues (1970 & up) being NM-M." A 10% discount is given on orders over $100.00, and 20% on orders over $250.00, as long as no item over $20.00 is included in the total. Sulipa recommends (*ahem*) the system of grading described by George Olshevsky in *Collector's Dream* No. 1. Postage charge is 50 cents plus 2 cents per item; double this for countries other than Canada and the U.S. No preprinted order form was provided (Sulipa was unique among the dealers we investigated in this respect).

We placed the standard order for *Hulk* 104 ($2.50), *Spider-Man* 77 ($2.00), and *Suspense* 81 ($1.25). Total cost: $6.31 ($5.75 plus $0.56 postage). The package arrived in 26 days (7 days after it was postmarked), sent book rate for 20 cents. Comics were placed in a single plastic bag and sent in an air-bubble, plastic-lined shipping bag, stapled and taped securely shut. No cardboard was used. The complete order was sent with no alternates: *Hulk* 104 in very fine, *Spider-Man* 77 in fine to very fine, and *Suspense* 81 in very good (although promised in fine or better). No statement of books sent was included with the order, and no other acknowledgement was received.

Overall: Comics not quite in the condition promised. No alternates sent. Some low prices. 15th most expensive order.

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Robert D. Crestohl
4969 Victoria Ave.
Montreal, Quebec H3W 2N2

"Marvel Comics Back Issues For Sale. FREE giant new buying & selling list now available. Over 250,000 Marvels listed in Good, Fine & Mint condition. Huge inventory of key GOLDEN AGE DCs, Timelys, etc. Low prices. Fast service. Try us; you'll like us." We sent for the price list and it arrived in 9 days by first class mail (postmarked at least 4 days earlier—postmark is unclear).

The list we received (which expired May 31, 1977) is a 7¼" x 4¼" saddle-stapled booklet (although we subsequently received a new catalogue which was larger and also typeset). It lists *only* Marvel Comics (fairly completely, with a few odd exceptions like *Warlock* and *Tomb of Dracula*), and a few miscellaneous Golden Age comics. Crestohl explains this within: "I accent my whole operation on buying and selling only the 'cream' of the comic book crop, the finest investment material (let's face it, at today's prices comic books are an investment)...*all* my money is spent on ONLY the key titles..." He described how prices have soared in the past decade and discusses supply and demand. He provides "statistical tables" (actually just sums of prices) to show how prices have risen in the past six years (based on his own price lists). (It is Crestohl who annually contributes the similar tables which appear in Overstreet's *Price Guide*). He describes himself as "an avid comic collector...for over 15 years" (although this had been changed to "nearly 20 years" on the next catalogue we received) and mentions some of the key Golden Age books in his collection—he is "a 28-year-old comic nut who is as crazy over comics as any of you!" He also makes the significant claim: "I've studied all my competitors (sic) price lists and have undercut them all so I can offer the lowest prices across the board." This last is simply not true—many dealers have prices lower than Crestohl, and many of the prices in this list, particularly on recent first issues, are uncommonly high. Some of the very brief additional information given for certain issues in the price list is in error; in particular No. 1 issues are routinely labelled as "Origin" issues, although this is not always the case—*Defenders* No. 1 and *Captain Marvel* No. 1, for instance.

There is no minimum order required ("everybody should get a chance regardless of how much he plans to spend") but a charge of $1.00 for "postage and insurance" is made on all orders under $15.00. Payment may be made in either Canadian or U.S. funds. A free mint copy of *Kamandi* No. 1 is provided on request with any order over $50.00. The catalogue lists prices for comics in three conditions: "GOOD", "VG / FINE", and NM / MINT", and books can also be purchased in "VG" and "FINE / NM" by taking prices midway between "GOOD" and "VG / FINE", and between "VG / FINE" and "NM / MINT", respectively. (The later catalogue lists four conditions: "Good", "Very Good", "Fine", and "NM / Mint".) "ALL ORDERS ARE SENT OFF WITHIN 24 HOURS WITHOUT EXCEPTION". And regarding alternates: "If necessary...we will always substitute a higher priced alternate than the first choice ordered..."

We placed an order for *Hulk* 104 and *Suspense* 81 in NM / MINT ($3.00 and $1.50 respectively), and *Spider-Man* 77 in GOOD ($1.50). Total cost was $7.00 ($6.00 plus $1.00 "postage and insurance"). A parcel arrived in 19 days, 8 days after being postmarked (promptly enough, but not likely within the 24 hours promised). It was sent as "printed matter only—do not bend or fold" with 25 cents postage ($1.00 charged). The parcel was uninsured. Packaging was poor: the comics were placed in a single bag (along with another copy of the price list, an order form, and an envelope), and this placed in a plain manila envelope which was stapled but not sealed shut. No cardboard was used. *Suspense* 81 was in very fine condition (although ordered in NM / MINT), and *Spider-Man* 77 in good to very good. Two alternates were sent: *Spider-Man* 78 in very good to fine, and 79 in fine. No statement of books sent was included, and no other acknowledgement was received.

Overall: Inferior packaging. Comics in slightly less than condition paid for. Postage overcharged. 11th most expensive order.

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continued on page 38

Discount Comics
Box 164
Santee, California 92071

"FREE COMIC CATALOG. Gigantic catalog lists characters, events, artists & writers for over 100,000 marvels." In spite of several requests we were unable to obtain a copy of the catalogue in time to place an order for this survey. When our first request was unanswered after 46 days we inquired again, and had still not received it 66 days after that. We made a third inquiry, and we finally received the catalog 9 days later (i.e., 121 days after it was initially ordered), although it had been postmarked before we made our third inquiry (19 days before it was received). The catalogue was sent as "PRINTED MATTER". No explanation was given for the delay in mailing it.

This "CATALOG No. 6" expires on June 1, 1978. It is 16 pages, 8½" x 11", on newsprint, and typeset, with many cover photos of comics throughout. It's a graphically attractive list, and contains descriptive information in addition to prices. Only Marvel Comics are listed, and a few (but not all) Marvel magazines. The list is fairly complete—prices are not always given for early issues but inquiries are solicited. "All comics complete and in FINE or better condition. Comics printed before 1968 are in VERY GOOD or better condition...Please include 75 cents with order to help cover postage and packaging...FOREIGN ORDERS (except Canada) add $1.50 for postage. The minimum order is $3.00...Your comic books are mailed within 24 hours of the time we receive your order." In addition a bonus of "FREE comics" is offered depending on the amount of the order (this ranges from 40 cents on a $10.00 order to $6.00 on a $100.00 order).

We could not place an order; if we had, it would have consisted of *Hulk* 104 ($2.25), *Spider-Man* 77 ($2.00), and *Suspense* 81 ($1.00). Total cost would have been $6.00 ($5.25 plus $0.75 postage).

Overall: No order placed because of delay in receiving list. Nice catalogue, some low prices. 17th most expensive "order".

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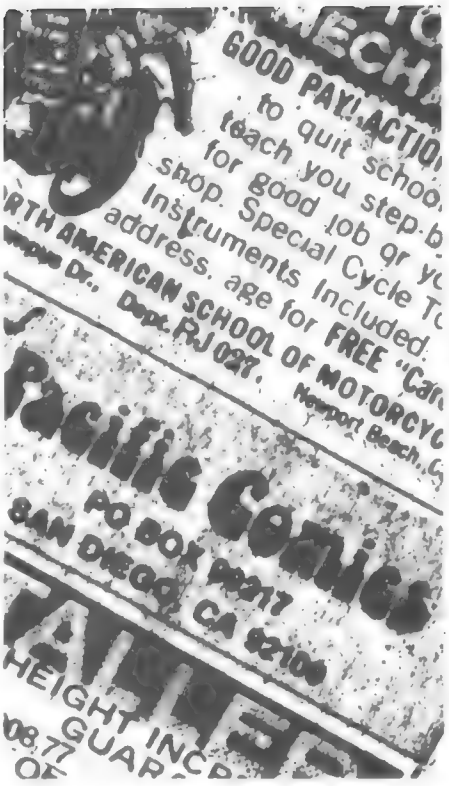
Empire Comics
1559 Mt. Hope Ave.
Rochester, New York 14620

"COMIC BAGS. 100 4 MIL Plastic Bags. Only $3.00 Post Paid. Send 15 cents for comic bag & Marvel Catalog." We did. A sample protective bag and a price list arrived in 10 days by first class mail (3 days after being postmarked).

The list is an unstapled 8½" x 5½" 12-page booklet. An order form is included "for you convienence (sic)." Only Marvel comics are listed (fairly completely). This "Marvel Catalog No. 8" expired on May 1, 1977. The catalog begins with a "letter of introduction" to "all of the many, many comic collectors whom (sic) may or may not order from this catalog." "We are located in Rochester, New York. A City that has more valuable comics in it than most parts of the country. This is why we sell our



"Many dealers do not know how to design an order form."

books for much less than our competitors." The odd claim about Rochester we make no comment on; but it is not true that Empire's prices are the lowest—several of the dealers we investigated had lower prices. Minimum order is $3.00 (although this is stated only on the order form and not in the catalogue); postage and handling charges are 50 cents in the U.S. ($1.00 for Canada, $2.00 for other countries). It is not clear what condition is promised: the "letter of introduction" says "I'm afraid we will have to send you fine or better conditioned books because we don't have that many of the rough conditioned books in our stock...", but the "instructions" read "All comics on this list are in very good or better condition with most comics after 1966 being in fine or better condition."

We ordered *Hulk* 104 ($3.50), *Spider-Man* 77 ($2.50), and *Suspense* 81 ($1.00). Total cost was $8.00 ($7.00 plus $1.00). The package arrived in 18 days (8 days after it was postmarked), sent "Special 4th Cl. Rate" with 25 cents postage ($1.00 charged). The comics were placed in a single comic bag which was taped securely between two pieces of cardboard; this was then wrapped thoroughly in brown wrapping paper which was taped shut. A new order form was included, as well as a statement of books sent (no separate mail acknowledgement was made). *Hulk* 104 was received with several noticeable creases on the cover—the condition was VG at best, although promised in fine (maybe—see above). The other comic received was an alternate: *Hulk* 107, in very fine to near-mint condition (in place of the *Spider-Man* and *Suspense* books).

Overall: Superior packaging. Most expensive alternate sent. Possibly some overcharging on postage. 7th most expensive order.

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Estell Comics
Box 23442
San Diego, California 92123

"Want low prices, fast service, great choice of Marvel & D.C. Comics and a letter of acknowledgement with every order? Send 25 cents for both our Catalogs and an Estell Buck worth 25 cents on your first purchase." We sent 25 cents and the material arrived in 11 days by first class mail (postmarked 3 days earlier).

The two "Catalogs" are a "Comic selling list No. 7" (two pages, 8½" x 11") and a "Comic Buying List No. 7". An "Estell Buck" (a credit slip for 25 cents) and an order form were included. The list contains Marvel Comics, Atlas / Seaboard, Charlton, Dell, Gold Key, King, and DCs. Inventory is extremely scattered and incomplete in all cases, although most of the comics listed are Marvels. The list includes a "Red Tag Bargain Corner", which contains some damaged, poor, and fair condition comics at reduced prices. (We later received another price list with a larger selection of comics.) At the time our order was placed there was no minimum order required—since then Estell has adopted a $3.00 minimum order. Postage and handling charge is 75 cents in the U.S. and Canada, $1.75 for other countries. Depending on the size of the order made, "Estell Bucks" of varying amounts are awarded; these are credit slips good toward the next order and they range from 25 cents for a $15.00 order to $7.00 for a $200.00 order. (Since this last represents a discount of only 3½% we find it difficult to get excited.) Prices are generally quite low (among the lowest we found), but the catalogue makes no mention at all of condition. Same day acknowledgement of each order is promised.

The sketchiness of the inventory required us to revise our standard order considerably. Of our usual books only *Hulk* 104 was listed ($1.75); as alternates we specified as usual *Hulk* 105 ($1.75), 106, and 107 ($1.25 each). *Spider-Man* 53 ($1.50) was ordered instead of 77 (alternates 54, 56, and 57, each $1.50), and *Suspense* 76 ($1.00) was ordered instead of 81 (alternates 77, 78, 79, all $1.00). (The list we later received did contain all the comics of the standard order.) Total cost was $4.75 ($4.25 plus 75 cents postage and handling less 25 cents credit on the first order). We received an acknowledgement of our order promptly in 12 days (5 days after it was postmarked), specifying the books sent and enclosing a new order form and an "Estell Buck" worth 75 cents as a refund for the portion of our order which could not be filled—we were assured that the slip could be used as credit toward the next order, or else returned for a cash refund. Estell Comics was the only dealer

surveyed who both sent a separate mail acknowledgement and specified which books had been sent. The package of comics itself arrived 20 days after the order had been placed (13 days after it had been postmarked), "Special Fourth Class" with 30 cents postage (75 cents charged). Comics had been placed in a large jiffy bag with a single piece of thick cardboard, and the bag stapled shut. We were sent *Suspense* 76 in very fine to near-mint condition. The others were alternates: *Suspense* 77 in good to very good, and *Hulk* 107 in very fine to near-mint. Total cost of these books was $3.25; since we sent $4.25 ($4.00 plus 25 cent credit slip) our refund slip should have been for $1.00 rather than for 75 cents. (We presume a clerical error here—under "Total" on the order form we had listed $4.00, having subtracted the 25 cent credit above, so that the existence of the credit might have been missed.) We sent the refund slip back and requested a refund—but because of a changed address on our part we did not receive a reply in time for this report.

Overall: No promise re condition. Inadequate inventory. Low prices. Separate acknowledgement. Despite the listing of many alternates a credit slip (for an incorrect amount) was nonetheless sent. Least expensive order.

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Grand Book, Inc.
659 Grand Street
Brooklyn, New York 11211

"GIANT COMIC BOOK CATALOG No. 6. Send 75 cents for your catalog . . . More than ONE MILLION comics from all publishers in stock . . ." We sent 75 cents and received material in 10 days by first class mail (3 days after it was postmarked).

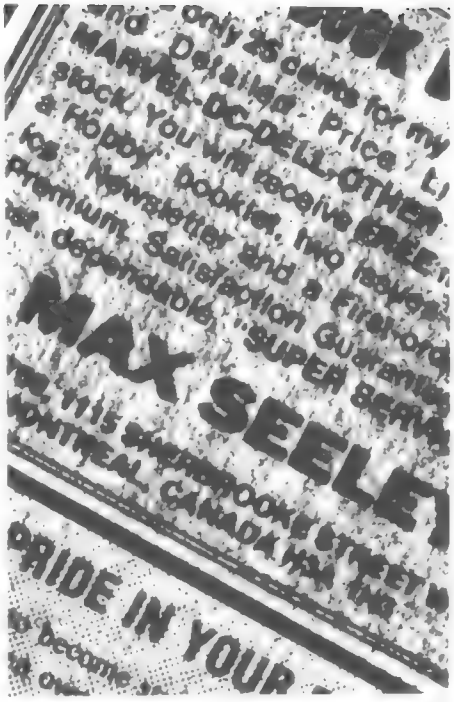
We did *not* receive the "COMICS FOR COLLECTORS" catalogue for which we had paid. A note explained that "a giant new edition" was in preparation and "we anticipate that it will be ready for distribution within the next few months . . . As soon as it has been printed a copy will be mailed to you immediately . . . Enclosed you will find complimentary copies of our current supplements." These were a "Marvel Supplement No. 11" and a "DC Supplement Number Nine" (each of these is 2 pages, 8½" x 11"), as well as a half-page list of "Special—35 cents each" comics (mostly Marvel supernatural and horror comics of the past few years.) The Marvel Supplement also listed Atlas / Seaboard, and the DC Supplement also listed some E.C. comics. As the Marvel Supplement was sufficient for the order we wished to place, it was not necessary to wait until the arrival of the full catalog before proceeding. However, by mid-August (some *five* months after it had been paid for) this catalogue still had not arrived.

The "Special—35 cent" list expired on May 31, 1977, but no mention of expiry date is made for either the Marvel or the DC list (presumably they would expire upon publication of the "giant catalog"). The Marvel list is rubber-stamped "DUE TO INFLATION, ALL BOOKS PRICED AT 50 CENTS AND 55 CENTS NOW COST 60 CENTS EACH." This list is fairly complete, and in general only the very early Marvel Comics are missing from it. Prices are on the whole very low. No mention of condition is made in this list (we can't speak for the full catalogue, not having received it). There is no minimum order, but a "service charge" or "postage & handling charge" (it is called both in different places) of $1.00 is made for U.S. orders under $20.00; this charge is $2.00 to other countries (although this fact is mentioned only on the order form itself).

We placed the usual order for *Hulk* 104 ($1.00), *Spider-Man* 77 ($1.10), and *Suspense* 81 ($1.00). Total cost was $5.10 ($3.10 plus $2.00). If it were not for the unusually steep service charge this would have been the least expensive of all the orders we placed. A package arrived 25 days after we placed the order (postmark illegible), sent as "Printed Matter" with 50 cents postage ($2.00 charged). Packaging was not as secure as expected, especially considering the service charge which was made. The comics were secured with an elastic band against a single piece of cardboard and placed in a plain manila envelope; grey string was tied loosely around this and the package was sent unsealed through the mail. A new order form and copies of the supplements were included. No statement of books sent was received, and no other acknowledgement was made. *All* the books received were alternates: *Suspense* 83 in very fine to near mint, *Suspense* 84 in very fine, and *Spider-Man* 80 in very fine.

Similarities in packaging and printing style of price list suggest that Grand Book and Comic Sales Company are affiliated (see above under Comic Sales Company).

Overall: Full catalogue paid for but never received. Condition of comics not mentioned. Postage overcharged. *Only* alternates sent. Barely adequate packaging. Low prices. Books sent in very nice condition. 20th most expensive order.



"We observed that it is a common practice to overcharge on postage and handling, particularly when shipping orders from the U.S. to Canada."

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Grandma's Comics
(Breakfield & Regelin Graphics)
Box 15304
Austin, Texas 78761

"Comics, posters, sci-fi, fanzines, & back issues. For catalog send 20 cents . . ." We did, and the catalogue arrived in 11 days by first class mail (4 days after it was postmarked).

"COMIC CATALOGUE NO. THREE" is 12 pages, unstapled, and digest-sized. It lists Marvel Comics (but not Marvel magazines), Jack Kirby DC comics, undergrounds, books (mostly Robert E. Howard), posters, "fanzines and stuff", and "a few portfolios". The Marvel Comics list is mostly complete—prices for early issues are not listed but inquiries are solicited. Prices are comparatively quite low. The list "expires about June 31, 1977". No minimum is required, but a surcharge of 50 cents is made for orders under $5.00. Orders to Canada must on top of this add $1.00 regardless (although this is mentioned only on the order form). No mention is made of postage charges to other countries. "Most comics are in Very Good or better condition—at least Good—money refunded if not satisfied."

We ordered *Hulk* 104 ($2.00), *Spider-Man* 77 ($1.00), and *Suspense* 81 ($0.75). Total cost was $5.25 ($3.75 plus $0.50 (order under $5.00) plus $1.00 (Canadian surcharge)). A parcel arrived in 19 days (postmarked 11 days earlier), sent "Special 4th Cl. Rate" with 30 cents postage ($1.50 charged). Comics had been placed in a single plastic bag between two pieces of cardboard which were secured together with tape; this bundle was then tightly wrapped in brown paper and taped shut for mailing. We received the complete order, with no alternates: *Hulk* 104 in fine, *Spider-Man* 77 in very fine to near mint, and *Suspense* 81 in very fine. No statement of books sent was included, and no other acknowledgement was made.

Overall: Very good service. Low prices, superior packaging. No alternates sent. Postage overcharged (automatic surcharge of $1.00 for Canada is unreasonably punitive on such a small order as this). 18th most expensive order.

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Jack Hunt
P.O. Box 194
Kenmore, New York 14217

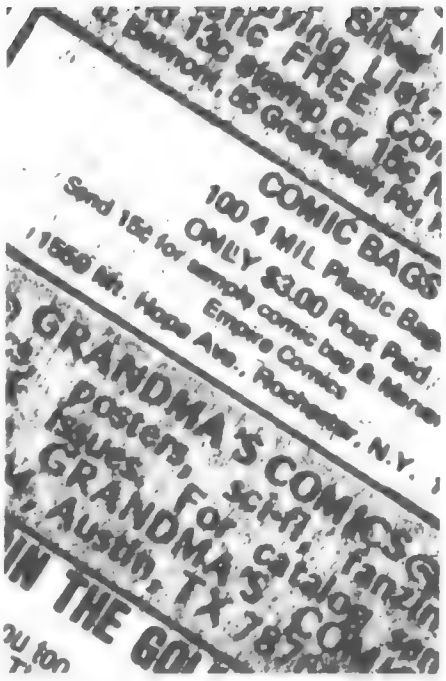
"FAST SERVICE. COMIC BOOKS. Buying—Selling. 100,000 comics in stock. LARGE CATALOG 50 cents. Includes Samples & $1.00 Credit . . . Marvel, D.C., Golden Age." We sent 50 cents

and received the list and samples in 17 days (postmark illegible) by first class mail.

This "List No. 14" is a 30-page digest listing Marvel Comics, DC Comics, several pages of "Misc. Comics" (many of which are Golden Age), a page of "Inquiry Comics" (higher-priced Marvels and DCs, with conditions detailed), Big Little Books, pulps, magazines, Classic Comics, and a "Millionaire's Corner" (some high-priced Golden Age comics). We also received a credit slip worth $1.00 on our first order, a sample plastic comic bag, and a sample information sticker for the bag ("Volume, Issue, Date, Grade"). The Marvel list is fairly complete. Prices are generally low. No expiry date is mentioned; however we did subsequently receive a "List No. 15" which "voids all previous lists". Minimum order is $5.00; "sorry but all smaller orders will be sent back." Hunt accepts Bank-Americard and Mastercharge—"minimum charge order is $15.00". "All orders must include $1.00 postage. Foreign orders must include correct postage." Most Marvel and DC comics are offered for sale in "Gd / Fn" or "Nm / M" conditions (except early issues which, along with the many "Misc. Comics", have a wider spread of conditions and prices).

To make up the minimum order of $5.00 it was necessary to add another book to our usual order. (Since the minimum order is so low in this case this serves to emphasize the low prices.) We ordered *Hulk* 104 and *Suspense* 81 in NM/M ($2.00 and $1.00), and *Spider-Man* 77 in Gd/Fn ($1.25). The extra book was *Suspense* 82 in NM / M ($1.00). Total cost: $5.25 ($5.25 less $1.00 credit slip plus $1.00 postage). A package arrived promptly in 12 days (postmarked 7 days before delivery); it was shipped insured with postage of $2.15 ($1.00 charged). Packaging was quite sturdy: comics were placed in a cardboard box which was collapsed to the height of the pile of comics, covered, and wrapped many times around with brown paper wrapping strips. A statement specifying the enclosed books was included; no separate mail acknowledgement was sent. We received *Suspense* 81 in near mint condition (an exceptionally nice copy) and 82 in very fine to near mint. An alternate, *Hulk* 106, was in very fine condition (although ordered in near-mint —it was not too far off, however). The other book received was *Spider-Man* 76 which we had *not ordered*; the cover was creased considerably, and the comic was torn on the cover and every page, with the tears often touching the artwork. While the book was intact and complete, we feel the defects rendered it less than good and hence not collectible. The *Hulk* 106 and *Suspense* 82 were separately plastic-bagged; the others were unbagged.

Overall: Low prices, superior packaging. Prompt response. Package insured without extra cost. Comics *not* delivered as ordered and in condition promised. 18th most expensive order. The general superiority of the service provided suggests that the damaged book was a fluke.


COMIC BAGS
100 4 MIL Plastic Bags
ONLY $3.00 Post Paid
Send 15¢ for sample comic bag & Marvel Empire Comics
1558 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester, N.Y.
GRANDMA'S COMICS
Posters, Sci-fi, fanzines
GRANDMA'S COMICS
Austin, TX 787

"No dealer stands out as one we could wholeheartedly recommend (although a few came close). But none scored uniformly badly either (although one or two came close)."

Moondance Comics
(Alan B. Goldstein)
Box 425
Wilmington, Vermont 05363

"SUPER COMIC SALE. 10% off ALL comics! 1000's of MARVEL's & DC's. FREE GIFT. BIG buy & sell catalog. Enclosed (sic) 13-cent stamp..." We sent 15 cents in coin (in lieu of a U.S. stamp) and waited—but after a considerable period (41 days) it had not arrived. A second inquiry brought a response: we received the catalogue 30 days later (postmarked 27 days before it arrived), a total of 71 days after the original request was made. It was sent 3rd class.

The "SPRING / SUMMER 1977 CATALOG" is digest-sized, 16 pages, and blue, and expires September 1, 1977. It lists Marvel and DC Comics (but no magazines) and also some Marvel and DC buying prices. The catalogue contains an order form and some "coupons" which must be cut out; these can be used to get "FREE!! 20 COMIC BAGS!! with any purchase over $15.00", "FREE!! giant 20" x 20" color CONAN POSTER by Tim Conrad with $20.00 purchase of comics" (a usual $2.75 value), and "FREE!! 10% DISCOUNT off comic purchases only" (as promised in the ad). Although these coupons must be detached in order to be used, a new copy of the catalogue is sent with each order so that the discounts are applicable more than once. The catalogue contains an introduction by Moondance proprietor Alan B. Goldstein which provides a little bit of personal background ("My personal interest in comics dates back more than twenty years. I was a fan and collector of comics before I ever dreamt of dealing them for a living. I've (produced) the successful CONAN RECORD ALBUMS..."), but which is mostly hype for Moondance. "MOONDANCE GUARANTEES THE BEST COMICS, MOONDANCE GUARANTEES THE BEST PRICES AND MOONDANCE GUARANTEES THE BEST SERVICE OR YOUR MONEY BACK, no questions asked." (While the prices are fair, they are not the lowest we encountered—if "best" implies "lowest" then the claim is in error.) Goldstein promises that "most orders will be shipped within one week." He goes on to note that "comic prices have risen more dramatically than almost anything else in our world. Prices will never be lower. NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN COMICS! Comics are fun to read, collect, buy and sell. How else can you make money while having fun? Remember CONAN No. 1 increased in value from 15 cents to $40 or more in only 7 short years." Also included with the comic catalogue is an 8-page digest price list of mostly Conan-related material (records, posters, paperbacks, comics, etc.) along with a coupon for a 50-cent discount off the price of a Tim Conrad Conan poster.

The Marvel list is fairly complete. Comics are offered in "GD / FN" or "VF / MT" condition, although very recent issues are generally offered only in "VF / MT". No minimum order is specified. Postage charges on all orders are $1.00 in the U.S., $2.00 to Canada, and $3.00 overseas. "A credit slip will be issued for out of stock items unless alternates are listed or a refund is requested."

We ordered *Hulk* 104 and *Suspense* 81 in "VF / MT" ($3.50 and $1.75, respectively) and *Spider-Man* 77 in "GD/FN" ($2.00). Total cost was $8.52 ($7.25 less $0.73 (10% discount) plus $2.00 postage). Because of a change of address, delivery of the package was delayed by the post office; but it was postmarked 21 days after the order was sent in (certainly more than the one week promised for "most orders") and was delivered no more than 22 days after that. Comics were individually plastic-bagged and placed with a single piece of cardboard in a plain manila envelope, which was rubber-stamped "FRAGILE" and sealed. The package was sent "Special Fourth Class Rate" with 30 cents postage ($2.00 charged). The quality of packaging and the postage actually used certainly did not warrant the postage charge which was levied. The complete order was received, with no alternates. *Hulk* 104 was in no better than very good condition (although ordered in "VF / MT") because of a piece of cellophane tape (and accompanying stains) doing the job of a missing staple (although this is not apparent from the cover of the book); except for this defect the book would have been in very fine condition. *Spider-Man* 77 was in fine condition. *Suspense* 81 was received in fine condition (although ordered in "VF / MT"). New copies of both the comic and Conan price lists were

included. The "FREE GIFT" mentioned in the ad was not received. No statement of books sent was included, and no other acknowledgement was received.

Overall: Postage overcharged. Comics not delivered in condtion paid for. No alternates sent. No "FREE GIFT". 5th most expensive order.

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Pacific Comics
(Bill Schanes and Steve Schanes)
P.O. Box 99217
San Diego, California 92109

" * NEW — 100 PG. CATALOG. Comics, Books, Posters, Sci-Fi. 400,000 Comics in Stock. SEND $1.00 FOR YOUR COPY."

This was the second most expensive price list we encountered. We sent a money order for $1.00—but as it later turned out, to the *wrong* post office box (the printing in comic books ain't so hot and we read "90217" instead of the correct "99217"). When no catalogue arrived after 41 days we sent a follow-up inquiry, *again* to the incorrect address, but we nonetheless received the catalogue 44 days later (postmarked 33 days before it arrived)—at which point the correct address and the probable reason for the delay became apparent. The catalogue was sent as "PRINTED MATTER" in a secured manila envelope, with 50 cents postage.

The "Pacific Comics 1977 Comic Catalogue" (No. 5) is the most attractive of all the price lists we received. It's 8½" x 11", 100 pages, on newsprint, with a full-color reproduction of Frank Frazetta's "Girl and Ghouls" as the cover. The book is typeset, listings are clearly and attractively laid out and contain much more descriptive information than usual, and intelligent use is made of graphics (such as cartoons and poster reproductions) to enhance its appearance. The catalogue lists an abundance of material, including Marvel Comics, Black and White Magazines, Atlas / Seaboard, some undergrounds, fanzines, Star Trek stuff, posters and portfolios, DC Comics, Charlton, Tower, King, Disney, ACG, and more. (Only the Marvel and DC Comics lists are at all extensive, though.) Introductory material describes the history of Pacific Comics, and also "welcomes" the new comic collector into the hobby, albeit a trifle pretentiously. ("We are seeing the increasingly close relationship between comic fandom and the master story tellers of all time, from Homer's tales...and the gods of mythology to the modern day small, inoffensive and equally heroic Hobbit of Middle Earth.") It goes on to list the virtues of the hobby: "It's easy to begin. It's interesting and always changing. It's financially rewarding...Values of most comic books are constantly increasing, perhaps faster than any other property in the world. Some of the newer comics, such as Conan have increased up to 100 times their original price in a 5-year period...You can start collecting at any time...the imagination of the comic hero creators and their fans produce new and more interesting ideas every day... Lastly, comics are good for you. The vocabulary used by current writers is unlimited and their imagination involves all areas of human knowledge...Best of all, there is a great spirit in comic book fandom. These are the nicest people in the world..."

The Marvel list is fairly complete; prices tend to be a bit higher than usual, especially on the earlier issues. No choice of condition is offered on comics; comics are promised to be in "Very Good to Mint" condition. There is no minimum order. In the U.S., there is a charge of $1.50 for postage on orders under $25.00. In Canada, postage on all orders is $2.00 plus 5 cents per comic book ordered, and elsewhere, $3.00 plus 5 cents per comic book ordered. (But foreign orders of more than $200.00 are shipped free.) Orders over $100.00 receive a 10% discount, and orders over $15.00 will receive upon request a free comic book (chosen from a list of recent first issues). A $1.00 credit (the cost of the catalogue) is provided on the first order.

We ordered *Hulk* 104 ($3.25), *Spider-Man* 77 ($2.50), and *Suspense* 81 ($2.00). Total cost was $8.90 ($7.75 plus $2.15 postage less $1.00 first order credit). Delivery of the package was delayed by the Post Office because of a change of address, but it was postmarked 24 days after the order was placed, and delivered no later than 19 days after that. Comics were placed in a single plastic bag and this was put in a jiffy bag for mailing. No cardboard was used. The bag was open when delivered, but it appeared to have been stapled shut previously and may have been opened by Customs. The package was sent parcel post, insured, with $2.15 postage ($2.15 charged). No alternates were sent. *Hulk* 104 was received in fine to very fine condition (spine slightly rolled). *Spider-Man* 77 (in a plastic bag of its own) was in fine (slight tear and damage on back cover), and *Suspense* 81 in fine to very fine. In addition to the comics we received a new order form, a return envelope, a list of the books sent and their prices, and a short thank-you note. No separate mail acknowledgement was received.

Overall: Attractive, informative price listings. No alternates sent. Prices a bit high. 4th most expensive order.

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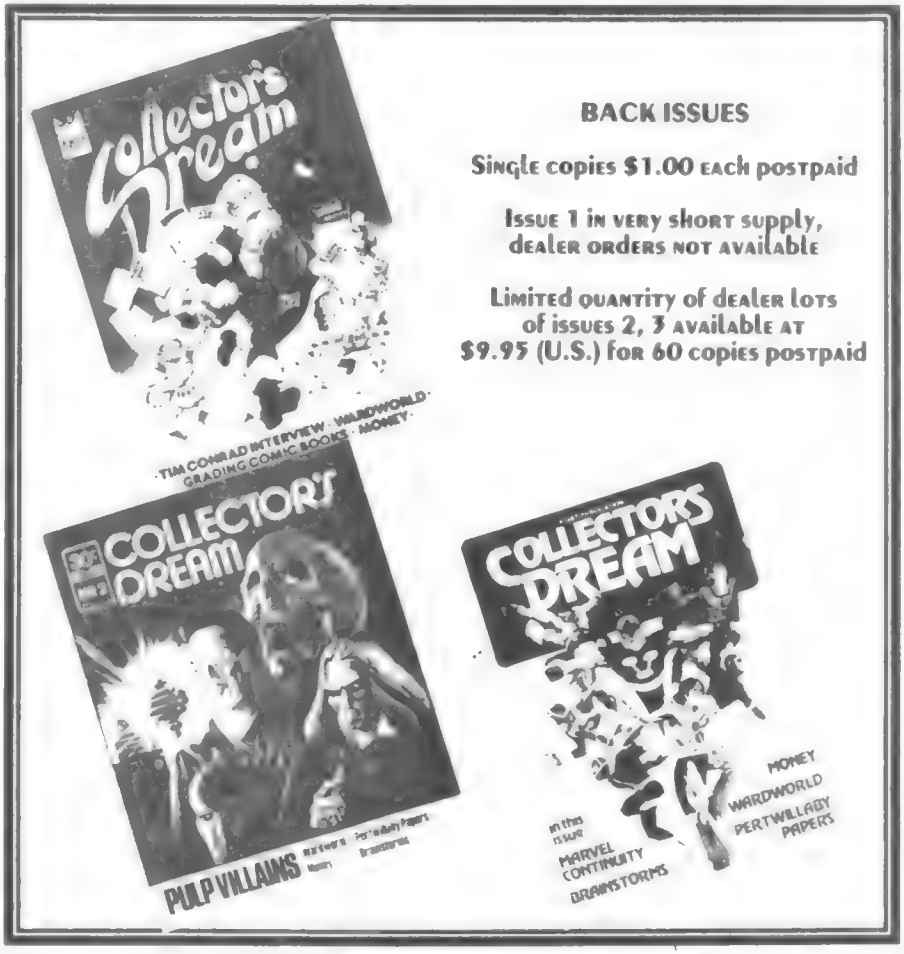
Passaic Book Center
594 Main Avenue
Passaic, New Jersey 07055

"Comics from Golden Age to Present. 100 page Illustrated Cat. No. 15. Send $1.25." This was the most expensive price list we encountered. We sent a money order for $1.25 and the catalogue and order form arrived very promptly in 8 days (postmarked 6 days before it arrived), sent "PRINTED MATTER" with 61 cents postage, unsealed in a plain manila envelope, which had been partially ripped open at the top. The postal code had been transcribed incorrectly from our order.

This rather large 102-page "Catalogue 16" (not 15) is mimeographed on 8½" x 11" sheets and stapled at the top, and lists a lot of merchandise: DC Comics, Marvel Comics, books, war comics,


Collectors Dream
TIM CONRAD INTERVIEW · WARDWORLD · GRADING COMIC BOOKS · MONEY
COLLECTOR'S DREAM
PULP VILLAINS
BACK ISSUES
Single copies $1.00 each postpaid
Issue 1 in very short supply, dealer orders not available
Limited quantity of dealer lots of issues 2, 3 available at $9.95 (U.S.) for 60 copies postpaid
COLLECTORS DREAM
MONEY
WARDWORLD
PERTWILLABY PAPERS
MARVEL CONTINUITY BRAINSTORMS

Disney Comics, Archie Comics, Golden Age, *Playboy* and the like, bags, magazines, fanzines, posters, SF magazines, paperbacks, and hardcovers, and various other items. They also offer 10% to 15% off list price for any in-print book ordered through them. Artwork is scattered throughout the catalogue. Reproduction in general is poor, especially on the artwork, and in some places is so faded that the listings are illegible. There is no table of contents or index and it requires some flipping of pages to find anything. The Marvel Comics listing is fairly complete, with only a few very early issues missing. No minimum order is mentioned. Instructions regarding postage are confusing as the catalogue and the order form contradict each other on this. The catalogue states that $1.25 should be added "for postage and handling and insurance", or else (in the U.S.) a flat rate of $2.00 for UPS service "For those who wish to recieve (sic) their orders super fast"; it also says that orders leaving the U.S. must add $1.00 and that any postage exceeding $1.00 will be billed to the customer. The order form, on the other hand, unconditionally directs the customer to choose either "POSTAGE, HANDLING & INSURANCE" at $1.50, or "U.P.S. (SUPER FAST) INCLUDES POSTAGE HANDLING & INSURANCE" at $2.00 and makes no special mention of postage outside the U.S. (We followed the instructions on the order form.) A bonus of 10% is offered on all orders over $10.00 for which twice as many alternates as first choices are listed, and for any order over $100.00. Prices listed for comics in the catalogue are for "Good to Very Good condition"; for a 25% surcharge books in "Mint or Near Mint" condition are offered. "POOR" condition comics are also offered for sale at half the catalogue prices. No expiry date is given for the price list. Customers are instructed to indicate on the order form whether they wish "refund or credit", or else "as many (items) as possible" if prices have risen on any items.

We ordered *Hulk* 104 and *Suspense* 81 in Mint or Near Mint ($2.50 and $0.75), and *Spider-Man* 77 in Good to Very Good ($2.25). Total cost was $7.00 ($5.50 plus $1.50 "POSTAGE, HANDLING & INSURANCE"). (We also enclosed a slip requesting the 10% bonus even though our order was under the required $10.00.) A package arrived in 17 days (postmarked 13 days before delivery) as "PRINTED MATTER. BOOK RATE" with postage of 30 cents ($1.50 charged). The package was not insured although it had been clearly implied that this would be done. The same error in transcription of our postal code was made. The comics, each individually bagged, were placed between two pieces of cardboard and put into a small jiffy bag which was stapled shut. *Hulk* 104 was received in very fine to near mint (although ordered in Mint or Near Mint), *Suspense* 81 in near mint, and *Spider-Man* 80 (an alternate) in near mint. (The 10% bonus was refused, as expected.) A new order form was included. No statement of books sent was included, and no other acknowledgement was made.

"We consider unreasonable the insistence that the presence of tape on a comic book not be considered a defect."

Overall: Unattractive price catalogue. Prompt response, superior packaging. No insurance on parcel despite promise. Comics in slightly less than condition paid for. 13th most expensive order.

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Ken Pierce
Box 332
Park Forest, Illinois 60466

"OLD COMIC BOOKS! MARVELS and DC's more! 100,000 in stock! Movie, Radio, TV items, mags, new books too! I Buy / Sell / Trade; Lists for 25 cents in coin..." We sent 25 cents and received the price lists 7 days later (Postmark illegible) by first class mail.

Unfortunately Ken Pierce was (and is) no longer dealing in comics and magazines—the lists we received were for other materials he sells, such as stills, and comic strip-related books. Although it is perhaps a violation of the air of detachment we've tried to maintain for this survey, we can't resist mentioning that we find this disappointing; we've dealt with Ken in the past and always found his comics fairly priced and graded, and his service friendly and first-class.

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Howard M. Rogofsky
P.O. Box 1102
Flushing, New York 11354

"COMIC BOOKS FOR SALE. 250,000 in stock. The complete Marvel & DC Groups from 1935-1977. Also Radio Giveaways, Pulps, Doc Savage, Walt Disney Pubs, Movie Items etc. from 1900-1977..."

We sent 75 cents and the catalogue arrived in 8 days (postmark illegible) by first class mail.

The catalogue is a 40-page digest-sized booklet with a detachable cover which is an order form. A lot of material is listed: DC Comics, Walt Disney, EC, Pulps, TV Guide, *Playboy*, "MOVIE, TV & RADIO MAGAZINES", original art, Marvel Comics, Golden Age, premiums and giveaways, Sunday newspaper pages, illustrated movie pressbooks, movie posters, photos, and more. The Marvel Comics listing is not complete—the later numbers of most titles are offered but there are often gaps in early numbers (even for recently-published titles). Prices range widely—on some comics the prices compare favorably with those of other dealers, but on certain others (often early numbers of a run) an uncommonly high price has been placed ($15.00 for *Hulk* 102, for instance). The list expired on May 1, 1977. (We subsequently received a new catalogue to expire by September 1, 1977).

The ordering information on the first page of the catalogue is sufficiently informative, but seems to us to be phrased in a decidedly unfriendly way. "THE COMIC BOOKS AND OTHER ITEMS LISTED ARE COMPLETE AND IN GOOD CONDITION UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED...REFUNDS WILL ONLY BE GIVEN IF THERE IS A DEFECT IN THE ITEM AND THE ITEM IS *IMMEDIATELY* RETURNED. CLEAR TAPE ON THE BINDING OR INSIDE THE BOOK IS NOT CONSIDERED A DEFECT. DO NOT ASK FOR OR EXPECT NEAR MINT OR MINT COPIES OF COMIC BOOKS. *NO ORDER WILL BE ACCEPTED UNDER $12.00 AND ORDERS $12.00 AND UP TO $30.00 MUST ADD $2.00 FOR POSTAGE* ...(The order form specifies a $3.00 "postage and handling charge on all Foreign & Canadian orders" which is not mentioned in the catalogue)... *NO ORDERS OR INQUIRIES WILL BE ACKNOWLEDGED OR ANSWERED UNLESS YOU INCLUDE WITH YOUR ORDER A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE WHICH WILL BE USED TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR ORDERS AND INQUIRIES. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO FOUR WEEKS (OR 3 MONTHS FOR FOREIGN ORDERS) FOR DELIVERY FROM THE DATE YOU MAKE YOUR ORDER AS OFTEN MAIL DELIVERIES ARE SLOW*...IN ALL CASES ORDERS WILL BE DELAYED IF PERSONAL CHECKS ARE SENT AS THE ORDER WILL NOT BE SENT OUT UNTIL THE CHECK CLEARS MY BANK...OVER 12 YEARS IN BUSINESS WITH OVER 12,000 SATISFIED CUSTOMERS."

We consider unreasonable the insistence that the presence of tape on a comic book not be considered a defect.

The required minimum order of $12.00 was the largest of any dealer we encountered. We had to add another book to our usual order in order to meet the minimum. We sent for *Hulk* 104 ($5.00), *Spider-Man* 77 ($2.00), and *Suspense* 81 ($0.80); to bring the total over $12.00 we also asked for *Hulk* 105

($5.00). The order form is ambiguous regarding whether the postage and handling charge of $3.00 for foreign orders is *in addition to* the usual charge of $2.00 for orders under $30.00; we decided that it wasn't. Total cost of the order was $15.80 ($12.80 plus $3.00 postage). A package arrived in 19 days (postmarked 9 days before delivery), sent parcel post and insured with postage of $2.15. Comics were placed loose between two pieces of cardboard; this was then wrapped in brown paper and taped shut, and string was tied around the parcel. We received all the books ordered, with no alternates. *Suspense* 81 was in very good, *Hulk* 104 in very fine, and *Hulk* 105 and *Spider-Man* 77 in very fine to near mint. No statement of books sent was enclosed, nor a new order form, and no other acknowledgement was made.

Overall: Some high prices. Highest minimum order of all dealers surveyed. Peculiar gaps in advertised inventory. Postage charge for foreign orders unreasonable. Superior packaging. No alternates sent. Most expensive order.

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Max Seeley
Suite 709
1115 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1H3

"COMIC BOOK BACK ISSUES. Send only *25 cents* for my 'Bonus' Package and Detailed Price List of 150,000 *MARVEL-DC-OTHER* comics now in stock. You will receive *FREE* my 'Comics as a Hobby' booklet, two issues of my 'Comics' newsletter, and a First-order 'Bonus' Premium. Satisfaction Guaranteed with my fast, dependable *'SUPER SERVICE'*." We sent 25 cents and received material in 8 days by first class mail (5 days after it was postmarked).

This "Price List No. 10" is yellow, 8½" x 14", and 8 pages, and expires May 31, 1977. (Before the end of May, and in fact before our order for comics had been filled, we received a new price list, to expire September 30, 1977.) It covers Marvel, DC, Seaboard, magazines, and "Dell Gold-Key and other titles", plus a few other items, and there is also a list of buying prices. (Enquiries regarding other comics are solicited.) In addition to the price list a few other items were received. Among them was a single issue (although the ad mentioned two) of a two-page newsletter called "Comics"; dated January 1975, it contains photographs of Seeley's apartment and comic books, and some biographical information, as well as an outline of his "philosophy and way of life": "I'd rather lose money than come by it unethically . . . (I would like) to be more than a name to the hundreds of people I trade and do business with . . . I personally write brief notes to all my comic customers when I send out their orders." "Comics As a Hobby" (Second Edition, June, 1974) is an 8-page leaflet which discusses comic collecting under such headings as "FUN & PROFIT", "HOBBY SECRETS", "MARKET VALUE", "CONDITION", "CONSECUTIVE NUMBERS", "PATRONIZE A FAIR DEALER", and "HISTORY AND GROWTH OF COMIC BOOKS" (divided with little elaboration into "Golden Age", "Blood / Gore", "Revival", and "Marvel Age"). The emphasis throughout is on the *value* of comics—the "reader" collector is distinguished from the "serious collector interested in condition and price of old, rare issues"; Seeley advises "buy and use as your 'Bible' a good Price Guide"; and declares that "the name of the game is value, which means that a new collector must not dispose of a single comic until he knows its value by checking it out in his Price Guide." "Comic Book Collecting from A-to-Z" (not mentioned in the ad) is another 8-page leaflet which is a short glossary of some comic collecting terms, ranging from "Alternates" to "Zap"—the list of items chosen is spotty (not that it makes any pretense of being otherwise) and is a trifle self-serving: frequent specific references to Seeley's dealership are made. A two-page leaflet of "Testimonial Letters" is also included (similar to those frequently run in *The Buyer's Guide*). Finally, a credit voucher of $1.00 is provided, redeemable on any first order of $10.00 or more. All of these publications included with the price list are obviously written with the young collector in mind, but are well-executed and not at all patronizing (although excessively sweet at times).

The list of Marvels is complete. Prices in general are higher than the norm, particularly on the early issues of a run and particularly if near mint or mint condition is specified. Some non-comics items (such as fanzines) in the catalogue are priced higher than usual in comparison with other dealers. No minimum order is required. Prices in the catalogue are for items in "GOOD" condition; comics can be purchased in "VERY GOOD TO FINE" by adding 50% to the listed price, and in "NEAR MINT TO MINT" by adding 100%. There is a $1.00 postage and handling fee for orders under $20.00; overseas orders must pay a $1.00 fee regardless of size, plus a 20-cent (surface mail) or a 40-cent (Air Mail) surcharge per comic. "All orders over $7.00 are shipped in protective padded bags to ensure their arrival in top-notch condition ." The 25-cent cost of the price list can be deducted from the first order. Seeley also offers "Starter Sets" of comics from a single title at reduced rates, and will reserve comics and accept time payments provided a 25% down payment is made.

We placed an order for *Hulk* 104 and *Suspense* 81 in NM-MINT ($6.00 and $2.00, respectively), and *Spider-Man* 77 in GOOD ($2.50). Total cost of the order was $10.25 ($10.50 less $0.25 cost of price list less $1.00 first order credit voucher plus $1.00 postage and handling). Package arrived in 42 days (the longest of any dealer), postmarked 17 days before delivery, postal class unspecified and with 25 cents postage. Comics were placed in a plastic comic bag backed by a piece of thick cardboard stapled to the bag—this was stapled shut and placed in a plain manila envelope which was itself stapled (not sealed) shut. No protective padded (i.e. "Jiffy"-type) bag was used although our order

SHOP-BY-MAIL

SHOP-BY-MAIL is our version of the "classifieds" and a bargain way to advertise for your wants or books you have for sale. Advertise every issue. Sell those doubles and books you're tired of and use the money to buy the stuff you still need. Fill in those holes in collection.

Your low-cost ad will be read by thousands of eager buyers.

All ads received are typeset. Please print or type all ad information. No minimum or maximum wordage.

SHOP-BY-MAIL rates are 15 cents per word. One-letter words such as I, a and middle name initials should *not* be counted in your word count.

Remember to include your name and address in your word count. Post Office box and rural route numbers count as 2 words. Telephone numbers count as 1 word.

Send payment with ad, payable to **G&T ENTERPRISES, P.O. BOX 127 STATION T, DEPT. SBM, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA M6B 3Z9.**

BUY—SELL—TRADE

For Sale: PRINCE VALIANT color French reprints covering Sundays 1938 to 1942. Write for details and free sample page. Salituri, 7105 6th Ave., Montreal, QUE., Canada H2A 3E3.

For Sale: Interviews with Ron Goulart, Tom Batiuk, Michael Whelan, Doug Herring, Doug Hazlewood, Alan Weiss. $1.00. Tom Mason, 705 Draper Road, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

For Sale: Send 25 cents for list of comics, SF, plus books on Occult, guns, antiques, etc. The Bookshelf, 534 W. Faulkner, El Dorado, AR 71730.

For Sale: Selling Marvels 1965-1975 at 75% Over street. Most FINE to MINT. Send want list specifying condition desired. Andy Kocher, 3369 Ira Rd., Bath, OH 44210.

Grand Opening Sale: All you comic collectors don't miss out. Send 25 cents for price list to: DeMarie's Comics, 8439 North 47th Drive, Glendale, AZ 85302.

For Sale: New fanzine for Batmaniacs. BATIZINE: News, reviews, and an exclusive interview with Denny O'Neil. 60 cents an issue. Subscriptions 5 issues for $3.00, add $1.00 postage. Issues can be bought separately, add 25 cents postage. A package no Bat Fan can pass up. Batizine, 1024 McDonald, Toledo, OH 43612.

For Sale: Limited edition, full color fantasy art poster of 1500 prints by FRANK BRUNNER, titled: "Comes The Dawn." A truly breathtaking piece of work and quite possibly his best to date. Cost is $5.00 apiece. Order from: Gary Kimber, 139 Highview Ave., Scarborough, ONT., Canada M1N 2J2. Cash or money orders are preferred.

For Sale: ACTION #2 VG small nibble out of spine $800.00; ACTION #4 G $250.00; ACTION #13 VG $225.00; ACTION #15 VG $200.00; ACTION #16 VG $125.00. Will accept time payments if necessary. All payments in U.S. FUNDS. Send to: Tony Frutti, 1285 St. Clair Ave. W., Toronto, ONT., Canada M6B 1B8

For Sale: Over 25,000 comics. Wide selection of titles from Golden Age to present. Send want list to: Raymond May, R.R. #3, Stouffville, ONT., Canada L0H 1L0.

For Sale: Humor Comics. Harvey, Charlton, Dell, Dennis the Menace, more! Low prices! Send stamp for list. Stuart Snyder, 119 Kennedy Blvd., Bellmawr, NJ 08031.

For Sale: Selling Mad paperbacks. Four for $2.75 and two for $1.50 postpaid. Buying STAR WARS and NOVA. Reed Sturdivant, 302 Hollomon St., Kenton, TN 38233.

For Sale: Marvel and DC comics. Send for free comic list. Juan Larregui, Jr., 877 39th St., Brooklyn, NY 11232.

For Sale: Current, back issue Marvels, DC. Low prices, quick service. Send SASE for free list. Jamme Coy, 127 Van Dam St., Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

For Sale: Love ROCK MUSIC as well as comics? Hundreds of live concerts—BEATLES, STONES, more! Send stamp for catalogue. George Belden, 613 David Dr., Streetsboro, OH 44240.

exceeded the $7.00 required for this service. The full order was received, with no alternates: *Hulk* 104 in near-mint, *Spider-man* 77 in very fine, and *Suspense* 81 in fine to very fine (although ordered in near mint). In addition to the comic books the package contained a personal handwritten note from Seeley ("Hope you like the nice condition of my comics and will order from me again."), a new order form, two pages of information on protective bags and on storage of comics, a sample "Collector Card" (for indexing purposes), a short addendum to the new price list (*Howard the Duck* prices), a "Profit-Sharing Certificate" (credit voucher for $1.00 on any order of $15.00 or more), and two current comics "Checklists" (taken, without credit, from *The Comic Reader*). No statement of books sent was included, and no other acknowledgement was received.

Max Seeley is also the operator of Superhero Comics (see below).

Overall: High prices, slow response. No protective padded bag used as promised. Comics in slightly less than condition paid for. No alternates sent. Very courteous service. 3rd most expensive order.

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Superhero Comics
Box 128
Weston, Ontario M9N 3M6

"MARVEL BACK ISSUE CATALOG FREE. Low, LOW prices. Fast, dependable service on all Marvel titles, all numbers. Over 50,000 in stock. Send for our FREE buying, selling price list today." We sent for it; it arrived in 8 days by first class mail (postmarked 5 days earlier from Montreal).

"Can-Am Superhero Comics" turns out to be an alias of Max Seeley (see above). The list includes only Marvels and the prices are identical to those in Seeley's other, larger price list. We accordingly did not place an order here.

Terms of ordering are similar to those offered by "Max Seeley", although not identical: for instance, the first-order discount for "Superhero Comics" is 75 cents on orders over $5.00, but it's $1.00 on orders over $10.00 in the case of "Max Seeley". On the whole the "Superhero Comics" price list manages to convey the same information in a lot fewer words than the "Max Seeley" list. In addition to the list itself a copy of the "Comic Book Collecting From A-to-Z" pamphlet was sent, but none of the other literature which accompanies a price list from "Max Seeley" was sent.

Total cost of the standard order would be $10.75 ($10.50 less $0.75 credit voucher plus $1.00 postage).

Overall: No order placed. High prices. 2nd most expensive "order".

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CONCLUSIONS

The summary chart displays at a glance most of the aspects of service we though relevant. It is apparent from this that there was no dealer who conformed to the ideal implied by the column headings: those who approached it in several respects departed from it in others. No dealer stands out as one we could wholeheartedly recommend (although a few came close). Similarly, no dealer scored uniformly badly, and stood out as clearly not recommendable (although, again, one or two came close). Service in general was reasonable, and one thing we did learn was that it should not be difficult to obtain mid-sixties Marvels in nice condition, since they seem to be in abundance and we received them from many dealers. Comics in condition significantly better than "good" or "very good" were the rule rather than the exception. Examination of the price lists also confirms what most of us already knew about early Marvels: prices continue to soar startlingly on these, and if there is such a thing as an "average" (in terms of income) Marvel collector not currently in possession of these books, it is unlikely he will ever have them.

A few summary remarks are in order. The mean cost of a price list was about 30 cents, and the mean delivery time of a list (disregarding those dealers who didn't respond to our initial request) was about 17 days. Of 21 comic dealers, only 8 offer a choice of condition, only 2 have an inventory which could be called sketchy, and only 8 required a minimum order. In only three cases was it necessary to pad the order to make up the minimum.

Mean cost of an order was about $7.65. All of the 18 orders actually placed were received. Mean delivery time (excluding the two whose delivery date was uncertain) was about 22 days. 7 dealers provided packaging which we felt we could call superior, and 2 provided clearly inadequate packaging. All but 8 dealers sent at least one alternate in place of a first choice. Only 7 dealers sent comics which were all clearly in at least the condition promised; only 3 dealers sent comics which were in clearly poorer condition than promised. Only 2 dealers sent credit slips (no doubt our abundant listing of alternate choices is responsible for that). Only 3 dealers sent an acknowledgement of our order by separate mail, and only 5 dealers sent (separately or otherwise) a list of the books which were shipped; this surprises us, as we consider both of these to be important and informative courtesies.

High-low prices for *Fantastic Four* No. 1 were $750.00 and $200.00, for *Howard the Duck* No. 1 were $18.00 and $7.00, and the latest issues of *Incredible Hulk* (to get a handle on prices for "cheap Marvels") were $1.50 and 35 cents. In most cases these prices have risen in subsequent lists.

We observed that it is a common practice to overcharge on postage and handling, particularly when shipping orders from the U.S. to Canada. Many dealers placed an automatic surcharge on orders to Canada which turned out not to be justified in light of the quality of packaging and the postage actually used when the order was shipped. Others used the extra postage fee to place expensive and unnecessary insurance on the parcel; we consider such insurance a courtesy if the dealer wishes to supply it himself, but since *we* are unknowingly paying for it we would prefer to have the money returned rather than given to the U.S. Postal Service. In general, a flat postage fee discriminates sharply against small orders, and a Canadian surcharge even more so.

Many dealers still don't know how to design an order form which allows the customer to fill in the necessary information without having to write or print extremely small, or else take ten lines to describe what should only require one or two (such as in the listing of alternates individually, compelled by the form, instead of together as a run, e.g., "Hulk 105-107"). (And, as a minor quibble, as Canadians we nationalistically object to forms that leave fixed, small spaces for "CITY", "STATE", and "ZIP".)

Several dealers claim to have studied all their competitors' price lists, and thus to have the "lowest prices". In no case was this true, and in fact there was no dealer whose prices were consistently lower than those of other dealers (nor one whose prices were consistently higher—although one or two came close). As a consequence it really is necessary to distribute purchases among several dealers if the true "lowest" prices are sought. We expect that the information gathered by the survey gives some indication of the dealers whose prices tend to be low overall.

Of course it is necessary to keep in mind what was *not* learned by this survey. There are many more dealers besides those advertising in Marvel Comics; there are many other comics besides the mid-60s Marvels we asked for; and in particular there are many more expensive comics than those we could afford to ask for. Deals involving expensive comics have an entirely different character to them, and the motivations, procedures, and politicking are of another sort than those of smaller orders such as we placed—behavior (and service) could change radically (in either direction) in such cases.

It should also be kept in mind that the survey described herein is intended as a *guide* to consumption, and not as a "bible" or canon of any sort. While the information given is factual, we are aware that any dealer can have an uncommon "off" (or "on") day, that honest mistakes can and do occur, and that the Post Office stands ready to set us all at each other's throats whenever possible. Unlike a single manufactured product acquired for testing by *Consumer Reports*, a single mail-order transaction is not always sufficient to evaluate a dealer's service. These uncertainties make word-of-mouth a valuable aid in the selection of a dealer; while it would be difficult to justify the use of such information in print, the experiences of a fellow collector can be very helpful in the search for a reliable mail-order dealer. It is our hope that the survey will be of some use to collectors. We eagerly solicit any comments from dealers, collectors, and hybrids on the subject, and lest any dealers be tempted to become lax, bear in mind that we could strike again, anytime, anywhere, with another such survey (we have fellow conspirators *everywhere*). □

HOW THEY STACKED UP

DEALER	Cost of List	List Delivery Time	Choice of Condition?	If no choice, Condition Promised	Marvel List Reasonably Complete?	Minimum Order	Cost of Comics	Postage Handling Charge	Order Padded to Make Minimum?	Total Cost of Order	Order Delivery Time
Richard Alf	free	22 d.	no	VG	no	$6.00	$6.25	$0.75	yes	$7.00	33 d.
Amer. Comic Book Co.	$0.50	14 d.	yes	—	yes	$5.00	$6.50	$1.50	no	$8.00	21 d.
Robert Bell	$0.50	9 d.	no	G	yes	none	$7.00	$1.00	no	$8.00	11 d.
David Belmont	$0.15	10 d.	yes	—	yes	$4.00	$6.70	$1.00	no	$7.70	12 d.
Black Gold Comics	$0.25	15 d.	no	VG	yes	none	$5.75	$1.00	no	$6.75	19 d.
Clint's Comics	$0.50	121 d.*	no	VG	yes	none	$6.25	$2.00	no	$8.25	**
Comic Sales Company	SASE	17 d.	no	G	almost	none	$5.00	$1.30	no	$6.30	38 d.
Comic World	free	8 d.	no	FN	yes	none	$5.75	$0.56	no	$6.31	26 d.
Robert D. Crestohl	free	9 d.	yes	—	yes	none	$6.00	$1.00	no	$7.00	19 d.
Discount Comics	free	121 d.	no	VG	almost	$3.00	$5.25	$0.75	no	$6.00	**
Empire Comics	$0.15	10 d.	no	VG	yes	$3.00	$7.00	$1.00	no	$8.00	18 d.
Estell Comics	$0.25	11 d.	no	none	no	$3.00	$4.00	$0.75	no	$4.75	20 d.
Grand Book, Inc.	$0.75	10 d.	no	none	almost	none	$3.10	$2.00	no	$5.10	25 d.
Grandma's Comics	$0.20	11 d.	no	G	yes	none	$3.75	$1.50	no	$5.25	19 d.
Jack Hunt	$0.50	17 d.	yes	—	yes	$5.00	$4.25	$1.00	yes	$5.25	12 d.
Moondance Comics	stamp	71 d.	yes	—	almost	none	$6.52	$2.00	no	$8.52	43 d.†
Pacific Comics	$1.00	85 d.*	no	VG	yes	none	$6.75	$2.15	no	$8.90	43 d.†
Passaic Book Center	$1.25	8 d.	yes	—	almost	none	$5.50	$1.50	no	$7.00	17 d.
Howard M. Rogofsky	$0.70	8 d.	no	G	almost	$12.00	$12.80	$3.00	yes	$15.80	19 d.
Max Seeley	$0.25	8 d.	yes	—	yes	none	$9.25	$1.00	no	$10.25	42 d.
Superhero Comics	free	8 d.	yes	—	yes	none	$9.75	$1.00	no	$10.75	**

DEALER	Postage Used	Packaging	Condition as Promised?	Sent Alternates?	Credit Slip?	Statement of Books Sent?	Separate Acknowledgement?	*FF* #1	*HTD* #1	Cost of Recent *Hulk* Issue
Richard Alf	$0.30	VG	yes	yes	no	no	no	—	$18	$0.50
Amer. Comic Book Co.	$2.15	G	no	yes	no	no	no	$600‡	$10‡	$1.00‡
Robert Bell	$0.30	G	yes	yes	no	no	yes	$200	$10	$0.75
David Belmont	$0.88	VG	almost	yes	yes	yes	no	$750‡	$15‡	$0.75‡
Black Gold Comics	$1.75	G	yes	no	no	no	yes	$260	$8	$0.75
Clint's Comics	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	$350	$10	$0.50
Comic Sales Company	$0.50	NG	yes	no	no	no	no	$300	—	$0.65
Comic World	$0.20	G	almost	no	no	no	no	$325	$10‡	$0.35
Robert D. Crestohl	$0.25	NG	almost	yes	no	no	no	$750‡	$15‡	$1.00‡
Discount Comics	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	Inquire	$16	$0.40
Empire Comics	$0.25	VG	almost	yes	no	yes	no	$300	$10	$0.60
Estell Comics	$0.30	G	—	yes	yes	yes	yes	—	$10	$0.50
Grand Book, Inc.	$0.50	OK	—	yes	no	no	no	—	—	$0.50
Grandma's Comics	$0.30	VG	yes	no	no	no	no	Write	$8	$0.60
Jack Hunt	$2.15	VG	no	yes	no	yes	no	$475‡	$8‡	$1.25‡
Moondance Comics	$0.30	G	no	no	no	no	no	$750‡	$12‡	$0.75‡
Pacific Comics	$2.15	G	yes	no	no	yes	no	Inquire	Inquire	$0.50
Passaic Book Center	$0.30	VG	almost	yes	no	no	no	—	$7	$0.44‡
Howard M. Rogofsky	$2.15	VG	yes	no	no	no	no	$300	$15	$0.75
Max Seeley	$0.25	OK	almost	no	no	no	no	$250	$9	$1.50‡
Superhero Comics	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	$250	$9	$1.50‡

NOTES:
* Extenuating circumstances
** No order placed
† Maximum time; actual time likely less
‡ Top condition available

1978 R. Ronald Gomes

G&T Enterprises does not agree with the sentiments against the Price Guide *expressed in this article; we cannot sanction ignorance of any kind, and this includes ignorance of what one's comic might currently bring on the market. The villain of this article, however, very vividly illustrates the kind of ignorance which is found all too frequently in this hobby and which serves to stifle intelligent discussion of the hobby's monetary aspects. Such people should, in our opinion, be gently educated; in the event this fails, they should be firmly given the boot.* —*G.O.*

ON GETTING ONE'S JUST DESERTS

by Jay L. Zilber

Once upon a time, there was no such thing as comics fandom, or fanzines, or conventions, or art portfolios, or anthropomorphic ducks. Or comic book price guides. And once upon a time, Supersnipe was the boy with the most comic books in America. No doubt, he paid cover price or less for them, too.

Now, Supersnipe is also the name of one of New York City's most prominent comics specialty stores. Here one can pick up the latest comics several weeks in advance, before they hit regular newsstands, as well as a healthy assortment of comics-related paperbacks, hardbacks, fanzines, and back issues, many of which are severely overpriced (though there are also a few excellent bargains if one looks in the right places). Should you happen to wander into the Supersnipe Comics Emporium at just the right time, you can expect to run into any number of well-known fannish folk, or an occasional "big-name" professional, or a motley collection of plain, ordinary weirdos that give New York City the reputation it boasts today.

On one particular Sunday afternoon, I decided to visit Supersnipe with Ken, a friend of mine. Ken and I have a mutual friend who works at Supersnipe whom I shall refer to as XXXXX. XXXXX is not his real name, but for reasons which will soon become apparent I shall mask his true identity behind this pseudonym. XXXXX is a comics fan and collector, though he has no overwhelming love for the business end of collecting. He continues to work at Supersnipe because the money he earns keeps his new comics coming in...and also because it's a nice place to hang around in several days a week when one is an enthusiastic comics fan.

And there we were, myself, Ken and XXXXX. In the background, potential customers drifted in and out, scanning the comics racks and such, occasionally plunking down a handful of change and trotting off with their newly-purchased treasures. Suddenly, the serenity of our fannish get-together was interrupted by a man in his thirties and his 8-year-old son. From the moment they entered it was quite obvious which of the two was more interested in comics collecting.

The man in his thirties eyed the narrow confines of the Supersnipe Comics Emporium, its walls lined with paperbacks, Golden Age reprints, and original art. Promptly, he asked of XXXXX, "My son and I are interested in starting a comic book collection. Can you tell us how to get started?"

"Well," began XXXXX, "I guess you can look at the new books to see which titles you think you might like. I can recommend a few of the better ones..."

The man in his thirties frowned. "No, no, that's not what I" have in mind, exactly. I mean, is there some sort of book that will tell us what titles have been published, and how much they're worth."

Ken, XXXXX, and I exchanged glances. Do we really want to start these people on the road to fandom by corrupting them with the *Price Guide?* Certainly not! was our telepathic agreement. Ken and XXXXX tried to explain that investment was not a particularly admirable reason to collect comics, that the hobby is best enjoyed simply by reading the books and appreciating them on the level on which they were intended to be appreciated by the people who wrote, drew, and created them. But the man was unimpressed. "That's all very well and good, but *is* there a book that catalogs comics by title, number, and price?"

There was no further point in hedging around it. "Yes," XXXXX said, "there's a book called the *Comic Book Price Guide*, but —"

"Do you have it in stock?" interrupted the man in his thirties.

"No, but —"

"Can you tell me where I can get a copy?" The man was determined, all right. No doubt he'd heard on television about some jerk who had paid $1801.26 for an old funnybook, and was convinced that this was what comics fandom is all about.

Nonetheless, XXXXX was not yet defeated. "Look at these," he said, flipping through a bin full of comics in assorted less-than-mint conditions. "We're selling these books for 10 cents apiece because they're not in especially good condition. Other are just slow movers. But if you look them up in the *Price Guide*, you'll find them listed from 50 cents up to $1.00 or $2.00 or more. The prices in the book don't mean a thing! The guy who publishes it finds out what dealers are *trying* to sell their books for—regardless of whether or not the books are actually selling at those prices. For infrequently-sold books, he just picks any old arbitrary price that he thinks "sounds" just about right, depending on how old they are and maybe who drew them. So those numbers he puts down don't mean shoelaces! The fact that we're selling his $2.00 comics for 10 cents proves that!"

Ken added, "A comic book is only worth what you're willing to pay for it, and not a penny more."

The man in his thirties was clearly disappointed, but he wasn't quite ready to give up, either. "Okay...so how do I know which comic books I want to buy unless I have *some* sort of guide to follow?"

"That's easy," said XXXXX. "First of all, you don't buy old comics here. Except for those discount books, most of our stock is overpriced because we have to take in a large profit on each sale to stay in business. What you ought to do is to go to a comics convention where you can shop around and compare each dealer's prices before you buy anything. That way, you can look through their stock and see exactly what you're getting, decide if you like it, and find the dealer who is asking the least for it. Plus, you can bargain with some dealers, and a lot of them can be easily talked into lowering their prices a bit if they've had a slow day..."

The man's eyes lit up, intrigued by this line of discussion. "Comics conventions, huh? Where do you find a comics convention?" Ken and XXXXX quickly explained Julycon and Creation and Phil Seuling's monthly one-day affairs, and the man in his thirties listened intently. Finally, he asked, "Does anybody sell this *Price Guide* at these conventions?"

Meanwhile, the man's young son, totally engrossed by the racks upon racks of new DC and Marvel comics, started to pull out the latest *Spider-Man* and *Legion of Super-Heroes* to examine them more closely. "Can we get some of these, Dad?" he pleaded excitedly.

The man in his thirties put the comics back in the racks, grasped his son's hand firmly, and headed for the exit. "Not now, not now. I think our best bet is to go to a comics convention. We can get a copy of the *Price Guide*, and that way we'll know what we're really interested in." The man in his thirties thanked us kindly, and walked out of the store with his reluctant son in tow. Ken, XXXXX, and I exchanged glances again, each of us thinking the same unspoken thoughts...

It would be rather nice if the moral of this sad little tale could also be left unspoken. But given the state of affairs that allows this sort of sorry vignette to occur, it might be best if a few brief words were properly minced here.

It was not so long ago that, to the small subculture who knew what it meant at all, the phrase "comics fandom" was wholly interchangeable with "fun". It still is, if one knows where to look. But more and more, the general public is under the impression that comics collecting is primarily associated with Big Bucks. Money. Investment. Money. Greed. Money. Every time the local television

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station gives any coverage to a convention, you can bet your bottom dollar—or your unsold 500 copies of *Shazam* No. 1—that the reporter is going to gush over the incredible amounts of money that are being asked for certain books, and that the dealer being interviewed will cheerfully suggest to the home audience that they run right up to their attics to see what sort of forgotten valuable collector's items they might unknowingly be hoarding.

Certainly, comics fandom could benefit by a clever public relations person who could set straight a few grinning TV reporters on the matter of "what fandom is all about." Buying and selling old comics are always going to be an important part of this hobby, but there's so much more to it than that. Fandom isn't *really* overrun with people who are hopelessly preoccupied with the cash value of their collection—just with people who can't think of a better or easier way to explain fandom in twenty seconds or less.

And while it doesn't help comics fandom's public image any when absurdly inflated transactions are glorified by the mass media, we can—if nothing else—grit our teeth until the public knows better, and console ourselves with the knowledge that anyone who would pay multiple-thousands of dollars for an old comic book *deserves* to lose that much money. There *is* justice in this world.

As a matter of fact, I can think of a certain man in his thirties who is well on his way to getting his just deserts. □

Comments may be addressed to ***Collector's Dream****, or to:*

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Columbus, Ohio 43214
U.S.A.

NEXT: WHAT ***IS*** *FANDOM ALL ABOUT?*

As of last summer, XXXXX quit his job at Supersnipe Comics Emporium. His real name is Dave Konig. (And just for the record, Ken is Ken Gale.)

WARDWORLD

© 1978 Murray R. Ward

by Murray Ward

SACRED IDENTITIES

Secret identities are a tradition among the costumed hero comics. The question to be asked is Why?

Super-heroes weren't always called super-heroes. The term "super-hero" didn't just follow from the name of the first such hero, Superman; instead it came into use among comic fans slowly over a number of years. In fact, only in the 60's and 70's have comic readers used the term to any great extent. Like the term "comic book", it is a misnomer. "Comic book" is a term referring to all, shall we say, magazines of graphic storytelling, not just comical ones. "Super-heroes", likewise, is now a generic term referring to all "long-underwear characters", not just those possessing special powers. For instance, Batman is counted a super-hero despite his lack of any superhuman abilities whatsoever. Whether it really applies to all the characters in question or not, super-hero is the term that is used. But what did super-heroes call themselves before the term came into use? Well, they played around with a lot of different terms like "costume-hero", "uniformed hero", and "costumed crusader" (all of which are more general in that they include both super and non-super characters, as long as the hero wears a costume), but none of these seemed to stick. A single hero might be referred to as a "masked man", a cliche from the ending of the Lone Ranger radio program ("Who was that masked man anyway?" "Why, son, that's the *Lone Ranger!*"), but this didn't catch on either, and besides it didn't include heroes like Superman and Captain Marvel who wore no masks.

I suppose it wouldn't have mattered what super-heroes were called by themselves or the general public if no two heroes had ever run into each other. But when they did, the problem arose of what they would call each other. In the early issues of that first multi-hero comic, the legendary *All Star Comics*, featuring the Justice Society, the term "mystery men" was used...mostly by Johnny Thunder, to whom almost *everything* was a mystery. And why (to get to the point at last) were these heroes called "mystery men"? Not because of their superpowers, not because of their colorful costumes. Because they all had (ah ha!) *secret identities!*

Except for an occasional kid partner or trusted girlfriend who might be privy to the secret, most heroes kept their true identities to themselves. This was true from the beginning of super-hero comics up to and throughout the 60's, with very few exceptions. Such "professional" super-heroes as the Challengers of the Unknown or the Fantastic Four might dispense with the use of secret identities because they were heroes full-time with no double-lives or other occupations. But the lone-wolf heroes who were not members of any team always kept their privacy, and the members of the "organization" super-teams didn't share their real names with each other, either. By "organization" teams I mean coalitions of several heroes from different titles like the JLA or Avengers, rather than "club" teams who have an origin in common, like the FF or the Challs. For the most part, secret identities were kept secret. And the tradition of the secret identity was kept sacred.

The whole idea of secret identities seems to have been thrown out the window in the 1970's. Look around! How many heroes in today's comics have a secret identity that no one, *absolutely no one*, knows? A bit of research and hard thinking might turn up one or two others, but the only one that comes readily to mind is Spider-man. Even Spidey only counts if you overlook the fact that the late Capt. Stacy somehow learned Peter Parker was Spider-man before he died.

The original Avengers used to respect each other's privacy when the team was first formed. Although today's scripters tend to forget the fact, the other Avengers and the world at large did not know that Ant-Man / Giant-Man / Goliath and the Wasp were really Hank Pym and Janet Van Dyne until *Avengers* No. 28. The only reason they all knew who Captain America really was, was because they discovered him unmasked floating in that ice-floe in issue No. 4. Rick Jones had not yet blabbed the Hulk's secret to the world. That Iron Man was actually Tony Stark who financed the assemblers would have been an astounding revelation to all concerned. And no one even suspected that Thor *had* another identity. Today the closest thing to a secret identity among the Avengers is the fact that only Thor and Iron Man know each other's real names, which is no big deal when you consider how many people outside the team know who these two are. Thor's Don Blake cover is known to Jane Foster and umpteen thousand Asgardians, friend and foe alike, including such nasties as Loki, the Enchan-

tress and the Executioner, and the Trolls. And the list of people who know Iron Man is Tony Stark is growing daily: Happy Hogan, Pepper Potts Hogan, the late Kevin O'Brian, Michael O'Brian, even the villain called Commander Kraken.

The X-Men have always had a problem keeping their identities a secret. While Prof. Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters might fool the general public, evil mutants always seemed to find our heroes with the greatest of ease. Like Xavier himself, they all seemed to have their own mutant-detecting Cerebro machines. Nowadays, with both the Beast and the Angel gone public since they left the X-Men, how long before someone figures out that Hank McCoy and Warren Worthington's old classmates are really Cyclops, Iceman, and Marvel Girl / Phoenix?

The list goes on and on. Although his best friend Foggy Nelson is still kept in the dark, all Daredevil's old girlfriends know he is really Matt Murdock. All their close friends know that Johnny Blaze is the Ghost Rider and Danny Rand is Iron Fist. Ms. Marvel's psychiatrist knows her identity. Nova has managed to keep his secret by dumb luck so far, but I'm dubious as to how long that situation will last.

I can remember when the DC superheroes were positively paranoid about keeping their secret identities secret. Superman and Batman would pull off some of the most impossible and oftimes embarrassing stunts to safeguard their double lives. Flash would use his super-speed to appear in two places at the same time to avoid being unmasked, and Green Lantern nearly drove Carol Ferris crazy by courting her in both his identities. And any time the Justice League members accidentally learned each other's identities, they were under oath to allow themselves to be brainwashed of that knowledge by Green Lantern's power ring. Of course there were little secret pacts between those members who were special friends. Superman and Batman had known each other's secrets since long before the League was formed, Flash and Green Lantern learned each other's identities soon after they first met, and Atom and Hawkman trusted each other with the sacred information as well. (Oddity: In one story only, *Brave and Bold* No. 50, Green Arrow and the Martian Manhunter formed a similar trust pact.) Still and all, I always thought the JLA members very noble and upright not to pry into each other's lives, which several of them could have done easily if they'd wanted to: Superman with his X-ray vision, GL with his ring, Flash with his ability to pass through solid walls, Batman with his detective skills, and Hawkman with his information-gathering device, the Absorbascon, just to name a few.

Nowadays, tho, secrecy is cast by the wayside. All the JLAers are privy to each other's real names. Almost anyone who teams up with Batman in *Brave and Bold* exchanges secret identities with him. Pete Ross, Jon Ross, Supergirl, all the Justice Leaguers, all the Legionnaires, all the Kandorians, all the Phantom Zone criminals, all his alien foes from other planets, Lori the mermaid, and a little guy who works in the Daily Planet morgue room know that Clark Kent is Superman, yet longtime friends like Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane are not entrusted with the secret. (What secret?) Check out *Superman* No. 271; even Braniac knows. Robin entrusts his alter ego to Batgirl and all his fellow Teen Titans, oblivious to the fact that anyone with half a brain can deduce that Bruce Wayne is Batman one they know Dick Grayson is Robin. The World's Greatest Detective himself is no better at keeping the secret. All Ra's Al Ghul has to do is confront him with data proving Bruce Wayne buys things Batman needs and the Caped Crusader whips off his cowl with an incredible *c'est la guerre*.

Now I can see where having one trusted confidant can come in handy. Many's the time Batman has had Alfred stand in for him as Bruce Wayne or as the Masked Manhunter so he could be in two places simultaneously. And of course, I believe a hero who takes the plunge and gets married should share the secret with his spouse (as if he could possibly avoid it). But these endless legions of people, whether they be fellow super-heroes or civilian friends or little guys in morgue rooms, all knowing one's alter ego would make me nervous as a cat if I were a super-hero. Better to go paranoid like Peter Parker wondering when someone's going to find you out than to go crazy all day every day wondering when someone's going to spill the beans accidentally.

"I can remember when the DC superheroes were positively paranoid about keeping their secret identities secret."

I don't say all super-heroes should have secret identities. That could become monotonous and boring for the readers. But what we have in the comics of the 70's is a population explosion of trusting souls. It seems to me that at least *some* super-heroes would try to keep the faith and not let anyone, and I mean *anyone*, know who they are in private life.

When Spidey was starting out in the super-hero game, the only other superheroes in the Marvel Universe were the FF, Thor, Ant-Man, and the Hulk. Nobody knew Thor or Hulk had alter-egos, the FF made no secret of their real names, and I guess people figured Ant-Man was too little to bother anyone. So they came down hard on Spider-man who insisted on keeping his double life to himself. "If he's not a criminal, why does he wear a mask?" and "Why doesn't he let everyone know who he really is, if he's not a coward?" were some of the ordinary citizens' typical complaints. The people who voiced these comments were your very typical average citizens who have an opinion on everything but only know what they read in the papers. In other words, they were nerds! It should be obvious to anyone who can add two and two why super-heroes need secret identities!

For one thing, if you're not invulnerable like the Big Red S, a secret identity can save you from being blown up or knifed or otherwise killed in your sleep. They can't kill you if they can't find you. It also allows you to eat in public restaurants without fear of being poisoned, and to walk down the street without dodging bullets. Second, it protects your close friends and loved ones. Who would pal around with a guy who's constantly a target for assassination? What girl would go out with him? Spidey often muses that if only Aunt May's heart could stand the strain he'd tell people who he is, but this is crazy. Unless Peter Parker thinks he can afford a mansion like the Avengers' or a skyscraper headquarters like the FF's, complete with computerized security devices, he'd better keep his big mouth shut. Even if and when Aunt May finally kicks the bucket, he should remain silent. There are still Mary Jane and his other friends to think of, not to mention himself. Third, secret identities allow a super-hero to cut through red tape and take action while the recognized legal authorities are still tied up in protocol. In some circles this is regarded as "taking the law into your own hands" and is frowned upon by the police, but again, they can't prosecute you if they can't find you. Finally, a secret identity allows the weary super-hero to pack it in and go home at the end of a day's work like normal nine-to-fivers. If you waltz around in a mask and costume all the time, people expect you to play the hero, not sit around and chew the fat like plain folks, a fact even Superman found out in a recent multi-parter.

So where have all the secret identities gone, to paraphrase the title of an old folk-rock number? Did all the superheroes get lonely all of a sudden with no one to talk over their problems with? This doesn't make sense, as they can talk over their personal lives with their friends, while their super-hero pals would always be there to talk shop. Have they all become more trusting than they used to be? Have they taken a peek into the "real" universe of comics-buyers and learned that no super-villain can kill them off as long as their sales are good, no matter how many people know their secret identities? What's the answer?

Whatever the reason may be, if you want to create a new super-hero with an original gimmick in 1980, your best bet will be to give him a hidden alter ego and keep it hidden. That alone will make him as different from his peers as the FF were different from their fellow super-heroes in 1961 when they decided not to wear masks.

I guess that's why we call them "super-heroes" now. They sure aren't "mystery men" anymore. □

pertwillaby papers

by Don Rosa and Ron Weinberg, reprinted from the University of Kentucky *Kentucky Kernel*

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EPISODE 28, AS WE LEFT THE LAST TIME, PROF SMYTE WAS ABOUT TO CALL ON DR MORPHOUS, COLLEGE PRESIDENT

BZZZZZ

OOOOO-HOO-HOO! IT'S AN AIR-RAID! TO THE RADIATION SHELTERS MEN!

HES DONE IT AGAIN

MISTAH MO'PHOUS... A PROFESSAH SMYTE TO SEE YUH, SUH

OOOO HOO CERTAINLY SEND HIM RIGHT IN..

GOOT TO SEE YOU AGAIN ADRIAN. I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT A PRESSING MATTER

CHOO HAVE A SEAT

EPISODE 29; AS YOU WILL RECALL WE LEFT PROF SMYTE AS HE WAS ABOUT TO ...

YOU HAVE TO MAKE ... PROF SMYTE. TEXACO STAR THEATRE COMES ON IN ... MINUTES.

HAFF YOU EVER HEARD OF A STUDENT NAMED LANCE PERTVILLABY?

LANCE? WHY CERTAINLY! HASN'T EVERYBODY!

HE HAS GIVEN MORE TO THE GOOD THAN ANYONE I KNOW! WHY HE ORGANIZED THE AGING RADIO-BIOLOGISTS' RELIEF FUND, THE ST. SWITHERAN'S DAY PROM & PARADE, NOT TO MENTION THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION CARNIVAL KISSING BOOTH, AND THE SONS OF THE REVOLUTION FLAG RAISING — AND A HOST OF OTHER EVENTS ACTIVITIES, AND SUNDRY SOCIETIES!

WELL... I HAFF REASON TO BELIEVE YOUR LITTLE FRIEND HAS BEEN DECEIVING ...

WELL MAKE IT QUICK. I THINK ED WYNN IS BERLE'S SPECIAL GUEST TONIGHT

EPISODE 30; AS WE LEFT THE TIME, PROF SMYTE ...

HAFF YOU EVER HEARD ...

HOO HOO THAT'S ABSURD! ... THE HIGHEST CHARACTER & VTEGRITY; PROBABLY A SCION OF AMERICA'S MOST OUTSTANDING FAMILIES!

JUST TO SATIATE MY KURIOSITY MR PRESIDENT, I VANT TO CHECK DEM REKORDS

OHOOO DID YOU SAY RECORDS .... EH... THATS ANOTHER MATTER... COME THIS WAY — I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I MEAN.

EPISODE 31; AS YOU'LL RECALL, PROF SMYTE IS STILL TRYING TO GET INTO THE SCHOOL FILES TO EXPOSE LANCE.

AS YOU KNOW ALL OUR FILES AND RECORDS HAVE BEEN MOVED TO OUR NEW OSO TITANIUM TIME LOCK VAULT.

IT SEEMS THAT LAST TIME I LOCKED IT UP, I SET THE TIME LOCK FOR ONE UNIT. THE PROBLEM IS, I CAN'T SEEM TO RECALL WHAT THAT UNIT WAS

IT'S NOT A DAY OR A WEEK THOSE TIMES HAVE PASSED. ITS PROBABLY EITHER A MONTH, A YEAR OR A DECADE. I'M PRETTY SURE IT'S NOT A CENTURY & IT'S CERTAINLY NOT A MILENNIUM

WHEN THE 1 MONTH MARK ROLLS AROUND — WE MIGHT CHECK OUT YOUR ACCUSATIONS AGAINST LANCE THEN BUT I ASSURE YOU THEY'RE COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED.

O. HINDENBURG!

NEXT EPISODE: SCHYLER ROATCH III!

EPISODE 32; DR A YOPHOUS COLLEGE PRESIDENT HAS JUST EXPLAINED WHY PROF SMYTE CANNOT SEE THE SCHOOL FILES.

OH DRAT! WELL, I MISSED TEXACO STAR THEATER... BUT TWENTY-ONE IS STILL ON —— THAT CHARLIE VAN DORAN CAN SURE SWEAT!!

PERHAPS I'LL SEE YOU NEXT MONTH IF THE VAULT WILL OPEN, PROF SMYTE. AS DAVE GARROWAY SAYS: PEACE.

YES YES—

WELL, WHEN WILL WE BE RID OF PERTWILLABY NOW THAT HE HAS BEEN EXPOSED!?

IT'S A LONG STORY BUT VE KOULDT NOT GET INTO DER FILES .... FOR NOW, MEIN FRIEND, VE MUST MAKE OTHER PLANS.

CURSES!

NEXT EPISODE: WE REJOIN LANCELOT P.

EPISODE 33; AS WE REJOIN LANCE WE FIND HIM ASSISTING THE MEN-ACING VETERINARIAN DR PHLEGM IN HIS MOONDUST LABS.

I ALL-WAYS SAY YOUR LETTING ME PLAY IN YOUR LATEST RESEARCH PROJECT, DR. MOOTPOINT... IT FILLS THE EMPTINESS OF MY AFTERNOON HOURS.

IT'S A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY LANCE

IT TOOK AN IRON WILL AND STERLING PERSEVERENCE TO GET HOLD OF THESE APOLLO 15 MOON ROCKS

HMM THINK I'LL HAVE SOME COFFEE.

LANCE THIS IS REALLY A GEM OF A SPECIMEN. IT COMES FROM A PART OF THE MOON NEVER INVESTIGATED IN THE LAB BEFORE

LETS GET MY BROWN FERROUS ACETATE SOLUTION SO WE CAN PREPARE THIS ROCK FOR DISTILLATION

TO BE CONTINUED....

EPISODE 34; AS WE REJOIN DR PHLEGM, LANCE & ASSISTANT IN THE MOONDUST LABS.

OKAY... I'LL PREPARE THE DISTILLING SOLUTION, PROFESSOR.

OH HERE IT IS.... IT TAKES A ROCK STEADY HAND TO GET THE MOON ROCK INTO THE FLASK & READY TO GO

OKAY. READY ORE NOT, HERE COMES THE ACID.

NOW WE'LL DISTILL THIS TO A FLUID AT 452°K WHICH WILL THEN CRYSTALLIZE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE INTO A NEW LATTICE

NOW WHERE'S MY COFFEE?

!!!!!! TO BE CONTINUED!

EPISODE 35; WHILE DISTILLING A MOON ROCK SPECIMEN, THE BEAKER CONTAINING ACETATE SOLUTION HAS BEEN ACCIDENTALLY SWITCHED FOR A CUP OF LANCE'S COFFEE. WE JOIN LANCE AS HE NOTICES THE MISTAKE

AH, WERE BEGINNING TO GET THE DISTILLATE . ITS ALREADY STARTING TO CRYSTALLIZE IN THE BEAKER.

NOW WHERE IS THAT COFFEE...

THIS CERTAINLY IS FASCINATING, DR. MOOTPOINT.

OH NO... THE SAME RESULT WEVE GOTTEN ALL WEEK... NOTHING NEW HERE

WELL LANCE... I'LL BE LEAVING THE LAB IN YOUR HANDS... HAVE TO GO TO A SEMINAR... CLEAN UP FOR ME WON'T YOU LANCE?

CERTAINLY DOCTOR, GOOD NIGHT

FOR THE LOVE OF ME I ... AM REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT COFFEE

NEXT EPISODE: A DISCOVERY !!!

EPISODE 36; LAST EPISODE AS YOU RECALL, LANCE WAS DUMPING AN "UNSUCCESSFUL" EXPERIMENT INTO THE WASTE SINK... LITTLE SUSPECTING...

THAT'S STRANGE—THIS CRYSTALLINE MATERIAL SEEMS TO BE SPINNING AIMLESSLY IN THE SINK.

How IS THAT POSSIBLE?

O, MECADAMY! I CAN'T SEEM TO HOLD ONTO THIS TO SAVE MYSELF!

WHIT!

WHY, THIS STRANGE MATERIAL EXPERIENCES ABSOLUTELY NO FRICTION... IT'S SOME SORT OF HYPO-FRICTIVE SUBSTANCE.

POOT!

ZIP!

THERE SEEMS TO BE NO STOPPING THIS ROTARY MOTION—WITHOUT FRICTION IT COULD SPIN LIKE THIS FOR ALL ETERNITY. THIS COULD HAVE POTENTIAL...

TO BE CONTINUED!!!

EPISODE 37; LAST TIME AS YOU RECALL, LANCE HAD JUST DISCOVERED A CRYSTALLINE SUBSTANCE WHICH IS APPARENTLY FRICTION-FREE!!

I'D BETTER GET THIS MATERIAL INTO A VOLUMETRIC FLASK. WHAT PROPERTIES COULD ALLOW FOR SUCH BEHAVIOR

PERHAPS NEWTONIAN MECHANICS WILL SHED SOME LIGHT ON THIS MATTER....

NOW, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS SOLVE THIS SIXTEENTH ORDER DIFFERENTIAL

WH... WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY CHALK. WHY WON'T IT WRITE!?

GOOD LORD! THE FUMES FROM THAT CRYSTAL ARE DESTROYING ALL THE SURFACE FRICTION IN THIS ENTIRE LAB!!!

NEXT EPISODE: UTTER DESTRUCTION!!!

EPISODE 38; LANCE'S UNBELIEVABLE FRICTION-FREE CRYSTAL HAS SUDDENLY BEGUN TO EMIT VAPORS WHICH ARE DESTROYING ALL SURFACE-FRICTION IN DR. MOOTPOINT'S LAB!!!

IF THERE'S EVEN AN INFINITESIMAL TILT TO THAT TABLE TOP..

OH NO NO!

NO!

TO BE CONTINUED!

EPISODE 39; THE FUMES FROM THE ANTI-FRICTION CRYSTAL ARE DECIMATING THE LAB — THE INFINITESIMAL FLOOR TILT IS TURNING EVERY LOOSE OBJECT INTO A LETHAL PROJECTILE!!!

THIS ONE CORNER OF THE LAB MUST BE THE LEAST BIT LOWER THAN THE REST OF THE ROOM!

THERE'S NO WAY ON EARTH FOR ME TO GET BACK ACROSS THE LAB TO CAP OFF THE VAPORS FROM THAT FLASK! WITH NO FRICTION PRESENT WHATSOEVER, EVEN THIS INDISCERNIBLE GRADE MIGHT AS WELL BE MOUNT EVEREST!

NOW.. NOW EVEN THE FRICTIONLESS BOLTS SUSPENDING THAT LAMP ARE UNSCREWING...

AAARGH

TOMORROW: DEATH... OR SALVATION!

EPISODE 40; LAST EPISODE, A CEILING LAMP BEGAN TO FALL DUE TO THE SELF-EXTRACTION OF ITS FRICTIONLESS BOLTS!.....

IT... IT'S FALLING OVER THE FLASK..

CLANK!

THE FLOW OF FUMES HAS CEASED — ALLOWING FRICTION TO BE RESTORED...

THIS FLASK WILL HAVE TO BE STOPPERED TO PREVENT THE VAPORS FROM LEAKING OUT! THIS MINERAL NEEDS A NAME.... — ANTI-ABRASIUM!

FUNCK!

MY GOODNESS, I HOPE THAT DR. MOOTPOINT WON'T MAKE A FUSS ABOUT THIS UNTIDINESS..... I COULDN'T HAVE IMAGINED IT ALL! I MUST GO OUT AND CLEAR MY HEAD... AND FURTHER TEST THIS SUBSTANCE TO PROVE TO MYSELF I WASN'T DREAMING...

EPISODE 41; LANCE HAS DECIDED TO TAKE HIS ANTI-ABRASIUM OUT & TEST IT ON THE CAMPUS AT LARGE...

OUT HERE ON THE CAMPUS I CAN TEST THIS SUBSTANCE IN A NATURAL SETTING... — HMMMMMMM...

SMASH!

HILL STREET

SCHWARTZ GROCE

TO BE CONTINUED....

EPISODE 42; LAST TIME, AS YOU RECALL, WE LEFT LANCE ON THE CAMPUS GROUNDS WITH HIS ANTI-ABRASIUM....

THIS ANTI-ABRASIUM APPARENTLY UNDERGOES SUBLIMATION PASSING DIRECTLY FROM THE SOLID TO THE GASEOUS STATE... AND IT SEEMS TO BE DWINDLING IN SIZE.

I MUST REMEMBER TO TELL DR. MOOTPOINT ABOUT THIS UNUSUAL DISCOVERY THE NEXT TIME I BUMP INTO HIM... WHEN I GET BACK TO THE DORM I'D BEST PUT IT IN A SAFE SPOT TILL THEN

OH — HELLO FEATHER

OH LANCEY, I'M SO EXCITED ABOUT TONIGHT'S BASKET-BALL GAME — WHAT TIME DID YOU SAY YOU WERE GOING TO PICK ME UP?

SAY, ABOUT SEVEN-THIRTYISH?

SEE YOU THEN, LANCEY.

YES LANCEY... SEE YOU AT THE GAME HEH HEH HMM

NEXT EPISODE: The BIG GAME !!

EPISODE 43; IT'S THE NIGHT OF THE BIG GAME BETWEEN STATE & U.! BUT THERE SEEMS TO BE AN INSIDIOUS FOREBODING OF EVIL IN THE AIR! Fan...

IT SURE IS CROWDED TONIGHT!

WELL, LANCEY, THIS IS THE BIG RIVALRY GAME OF THE YEAR!

ARE YOU PREPARED TO SEE JUSTICE DONE, MINE KOMRAD!

YES... I'VE BEEN PLOTTING THESE HALF-TIME FESTIVITIES FOR WEEKS!

HEH HEH I BELIEVE VUN LANCE PERTVILLABY VILL FIND THE PROCEDINGS SOMEVHAT LESS THAN FESTIVE...

I HAVEN'T SEEN SUCH A FIRED-UP CROWD IN A LONG WHILE, FEATHER!

OH, YOU SHOULD SEE UNDER MY DORM WINDOW DURING A PANTY RAID, LANCEY.

WHAT HAVE SHAKER'S SMYE GOT UP THEIR COLLECTIVE SLEEVE

EPISODE 44; THERES A FIRED-UP CROWD AT THE BIG BASKETBALL GAME — AND SCHYLER SEEMS TO HAVE A PLOT TO PLAY ON THEIR FEVERISH FRENZY...

FOLKS, HERE IT IS AT THE END OF THE FIRST HALF AND FOR THE 17TH TIME THE SCORE IS TIED — AND THE CROWD IS GOING ABSOLUTELY WILD! I TELL YOU I JUST CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS!

Don Rosa

OH, IT'S HALF TIME, FEATHER...

I NEVER DREAMED THIS GAME WOULD BE SO EXCITING LANCEY!

RUMOR HAS IT I'M TO RECEIVE SOME SORT OF COM-MENDATION DURING THE HALF-TIME CEREMONIES....

LADIES & GENTLEMEN YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE...

MY NAME IS SCHYLER ROATCH III, CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL EVENTS & AWARDS COMMITTEE — TONIGHT WE HAVE A SPECIAL EVENT INDEED...

VERY SPECIAL...

WHAT CAN BE THE PURPOSE OF THIS INSIDIOUS CABAL?!

EPISODE 45; LAST TIME AS YOU RECALL, SCHYLER WAS HOSTING THE HALF-TIME OF THE 'BIG GAME'. THE SCORE IS UP TO A TIE & MR ROATCH IS UP TO NO GOOD...

TONIGHT WE ARE GOING TO HONOR SOMEONE YOU ALL KNOW AND (GRUNT) LOVE. FOR THE PAST SEMESTER HE HAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY HEADED THE DRIVE TO RECRUIT BASKETBALL & FOOTBALL PLAYERS FROM POOR DEPRIVED EUROPEAN FAMILIES.

AS AN EXAMPLE, STANDING HERE WITH ME IS OUR FOOTBALL TEAM'S STAR HALF-BACK, FROM TOULON FRANCE — JACQUES LA STRAPPE!

DUH.. BONJOOR..

AND NOW, THE MOMENT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR WHEN WE HONOR NONE OTHER THAN... LANCELOT PER-TWILLABY!?! WILL YOU COME FOR-WARD PLEASE.

ACH... SVEET MEMORIES OF MARCHING ZEM OFF TO DER FURNACES...

NEXT EPISODE: **LANCE IS EXPOSED** (NO SHIT)

EPISODE 46; LAST EPISODE, SCHYLER HAD CALLED LANCE BEFORE A RAGING MULTITUDE WITH AN EVIL INTENT...

LANCE, TONIGHT WE HONOR YOU. YOU HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR STUDENTS OF POOR FAMILIES TO ATTEND THIS HALLOWED UNIVERSITY. LIKE YOURSELF, PEOPLE WHO COULD NOT COME CLOSE TO AFFORDING THE LUXURIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION!

WHA — *??

BUT YOU HAVE BYPASSED THIS NEED FOR FUNDS HAVEN'T YOU, LANCELOT PERTWILLABY!?! YOU HAVE COMMITTED A HEINOUS CRIME AGAINST THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY!

I ACCUSE YOU, LANCELOT PERTWILLABY OF ATTENDING THIS UNIVERSITY TOTALLY UNPAID AND UNENROLLED IN ANY MANNER, WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM!?!?

TO BE CONTINUED!?!?

EPISODE 47; SCHYLER ROATCH HAS JUST EXPOSED LANCE BEFORE AN ALREADY ENRAGED CROWD AT THE BASKETBALL GAME HALFTIME! THE MOB IS ABOUT TO VENT THEIR ANGER ON OUR HAPLESS HERO!

YOU HAVE DECEIVED THOSE WHO SCRIMPED & SAVED FOR TWENTY YEARS TO SEE THEIR CHILDREN THRU COLLEGE! THE HARD WORK, THE OVERTIME SHIFTS IN THE FAC-TORY TO LEGALLY FINANCE THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND YET YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO...*

GET HIM! GRAB HIM YAH!

PULL HIM DOWN OFF THAT PLATFORM! GRAB HIM

MURDER DE BUM!

FIEND FROM HELL!

SKUZ MUTHER!

LYNCH'IM!

YAH

THUMBS DOWN!

BLOOD! GUTS!

EVIL JUNK

GET HIM

KILL

OOOHOO HOO! LET'S HAVE SOME ORDER HERE!! — QUICK LANCE ...OUT THE BACK EXIT! I'LL TRY TO HOLD THEM OFF!

NEXT EPISODE: FLIGHT INTO THE NIGHT!

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